

Commentary

September 2005

The Inequality Taboo

Charles Murray

Myth, Fact, and the al-Dura Affair

Nidra Poller

Bush and the Realists

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In Bellow's Company

Herbert Gold

Among Arab Reformers

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Getting Over Oil

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Who Needs Ayn Rand?

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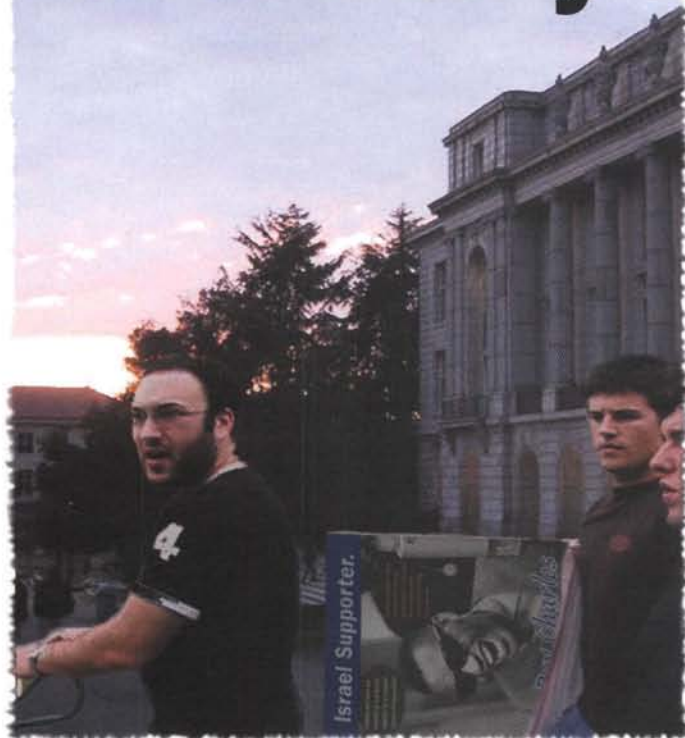
Homage to Bix

Terry Teachout

Books in Review

*Jonathan Kay • Kay S. Hymowitz • Hillel Halkin • Nell Rosenthal
Gabriel Schoenfeld • Benjamin Balint • Ken I. Kersch*

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E. Robert Goodkind,
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Letters from Readers

At the Quai d'Orsay

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to respond to the article by David Pryce-Jones, "Jews, Arabs, and French Diplomacy" [May], which I read with astonishment and indignation.

As France's ambassador to the United States, as a career diplomat, and as a French Jew, I did not recognize in this article either the country I have the privilege to serve or the ministry to which I have the honor to belong. The descriptions of France as anti-Semitic and its foreign ministry as motivated by "unremitting hostility to Jews" are complete falsehoods that seem rooted in utter dishonesty.

The number of inaccuracies and errors contained in the article is so high that I cannot cite all of them in my reply. Mentioning just a few might lead one to assume that I accept the others, while in fact I reject them in their entirety.

Nevertheless, I would like

to point out one particularly egregious example: the article's assertion that in contemporary France, "Arab aggression against Jews . . . has been accompanied by occasional loss of life." I wish the author who saw fit to make such a grave accusation had offered names, dates, and the circumstances of such murders. For my part, I am not aware of any.

I would like to conclude by citing one particularly respected figure, the president of Israel, Moshe Katsav, who declared during an official visit to France in February 2004, "No, France is not anti-Semitic!" I fully share his view.

JEAN-DAVID LEVITTE
Ambassador of France
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

In his attempt to find an explanation for the tense relations between Arabs and Jews in France, David Pryce-Jones deems it necessary to go back as far as the 19th century to describe

the history of the pro-Arab policy of the French foreign ministry. He does not hesitate to put forward the anti-Semitic tradition of the Quai d'Orsay and (he suggests) of France itself.

This can only strengthen the already confused views prevailing in certain milieus. As some see it, the pro-Arab position of France is behind any French critique of current Israeli policy, the clashes between Arab-Muslim and Jewish communities are a consequence of French anti-Semitism, and the least support for the Palestinian cause must be understood as a formal rejection of Israel's right to exist—and therefore fundamentally anti-Semitic.

This simplistic interpretation not only prevents any serious understanding of what is going on in France but tends to construe the French scene as a mere replica of the Middle East. France has always adopted a complex attitude toward

its minorities, toward *all* its minorities, not only the Jews. A more complete presentation of the situation would have set Muslim-Jewish tensions in a multicultural and multiethnic context. It also would have stopped short of the eternal trap of Jewish victimization, a trap that prevents Jews from building a positive Judaism, a Judaism turned toward the future and able to overcome the obsessive memory of a traumatic past.

French pro-Arab policy has been directly linked to its former colonial interests in North Africa and in the Middle East. Everyone knows that the Quai d'Orsay did not support the Zionist agenda at its inception. But Mr. Pryce-Jones forgets to mention that the Quai d'Orsay's position was itself in full accord with the views of the French Jewish elite of the time, which was deeply attached to the republic that had granted emancipation to its Jews and strongly opposed to a polit-

ical program that could be interpreted to justify the accusation of double allegiance. Moreover, this elite saw in Zionism a dangerous utopia. Even Dreyfus's innocence was not taken for granted by French Jews.

No one will deny the historical anti-Semitic bias of the Quai d'Orsay, the reality of anti-Semitic trends in various strata of French society, or the necessity to be aware of the dangers of current manifestations of anti-Semitism. But should we interpret every anti-Israeli policy as a manifestation of anti-Semitism, or build on this the image of a racist France?

Arab-Muslim hostility toward Jews is the side effect of a new kind of diasporic nationalism that is currently taking root among minorities. In a time of growing globalization, Arabs and Muslims living in the diaspora tend to gather symbolically around an imagined Muslim community, which transcends ethnic diversity and geographic boundaries. Through such an identification, the rejects of integration in France are able to share a part of the glory of those Muslims of Palestine who are perceived as sacrificing their lives for an "ideal."

In a similar way, Jews in the diaspora have identified with their coreligionists everywhere in the world, and Israel is for most of them one of the main pillars of their Jewish identity. Thus, commentators who dare to criticize Israel's treatment of the Palestinians are not seen simply as critics of a state's policies; they hit something sacred and thereby fall, supposedly, into the camp of Israel's implacable adversaries. In

the French case, Jewish institutional intellectuals have been able to convince international Jewish public opinion that we are back in the 1930's.

The time has come to produce long-term solutions. We have to create the conditions of peaceful and fruitful coexistence between Jews and Arabs in France. Bridges have to be built between these communities. In spite of its so-called pro-Arab policy, France has not done what it should to improve the social and economic integration of its immigrants and their descendants, whose resentment and bitterness may turn against not only Jews but against the republic itself. A drastic revision of state policy toward these groups is now a matter of urgency.

As for French Jewish leaders and their intellectuals, they should realize how dangerous it is to manipulate facts and fears, and how dangerous their role has been in destabilizing French Jewry and making it lose its sense of reality.

ESTHER BENBASSA

*Ecole Pratique des Hautes
Etudes, Sorbonne
Paris, France*

TO THE EDITOR:

David Pryce-Jones has unearthed hair-raising examples of racism and nationalism in the archives of the Quai d'Orsay, but a little comparison might help put these matters in perspective. What would a similar search unearth in the archives of the U.S. State Department or the British foreign office? David Wyman, Bernard Wasserstein, and others have shown how unbendingly the American and British governments refused all appeals to admit more

Jewish refugees from Europe during the crisis years after 1933. They found plenty of quotations similar to those cited by Mr. Pryce-Jones.

Between 1933 and 1939, when the United States let in only 17 percent of its quota for immigrants from Germany and Austria, France admitted more Jewish refugees in proportion to its population than did either Britain or the U.S. Sadly, these refugees awakened a backlash on the French Right that expressed itself during Vichy.

It is doubtful that the U.S. foreign service recruited Jewish diplomats before 1940 any more eagerly than did the French. In general, France admitted Jews into the professions, the universities, and even into high political office sooner than the United States. French universities never had secret quotas (as major American universities did), and French immigration policy, even at its most restrictive, never had ethnic quotas like those adopted in 1922 by the United States.

As Mr. Pryce-Jones notes, France has indeed appeased Arab countries whose oil it has needed. But in this respect it differs not one whit from the United States, which began courting Saudi Arabia in the 1930's and has never stopped. In the 70's and 80's France and the United States competed for the benevolence of Saddam Hussein. France is a normal country that seeks its own interests.

Why is it the fashion nowadays to single out France as systematically evil? French opposition to our war in Iraq might explain it, except that Germany, which opposed the

war even more adamantly, and Turkey, which actually impeded our military operations, never incurred much American animosity.

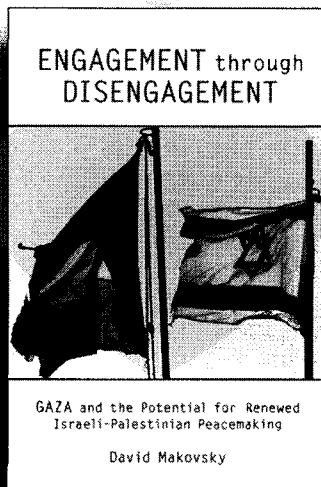
ROBERT O. PAXTON
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

The Quai d'Orsay has a sorry history when it comes to Jews and Arabs, and David Pryce-Jones does a splendid job of recounting it. He is to be commended for laying out so clearly and vividly the continuities of this peculiar institution, from the days of the exquisitely-named Ratti-Menton to the present. To the extent that I have differences with him, they mostly concern the relationship of the Quai d'Orsay to the larger history of France. Mr. Pryce-Jones presents the diplomats of the Quai d'Orsay as typical of a largely undifferentiated "French elite" and as "foster[ing] preconceptions . . . that have now come to threaten the integrity of the French nation." I would argue that the history of French attitudes toward the Jews is more complex and ambiguous, and that the importance of the Quai d'Orsay for present-day French dilemmas is more limited.

Start with the history. Mr. Pryce-Jones quotes Clermont-Tonnerre's famous principle, formulated in 1789, that "everything must be refused to the Jews as a nation, and everything granted to the Jews as individuals." It is a problematic principle, as Mr. Pryce-Jones notes, because of the suspicion it betrays of any collective identity other than a uniform French one. The republican tradition that enshrined it as dogma can be faulted in many respects.

But how much does this



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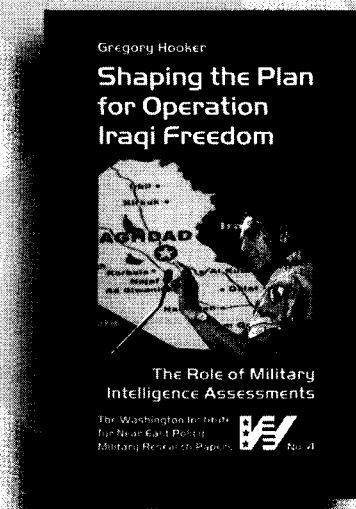
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tradition have to do with the anti-Semitism that Mr. Pryce-Jones describes? Something, certainly. But the history of modern France is one of bitter ideological and cultural divisions. Let us not forget that the worst hatred of the Jews, and the worst crimes against them, from the Dreyfus affair through Vichy to the National Front, came almost exclusively from the *enemies* of Clermont-Tonnerre's principle and of the republican tradition. That is to say, they came from men who wanted to give the Jews nothing, either as a "nation" or as individuals. While there were many republican anti-Semites, the worst anti-Semitism tended to come from those who loathed the republic and longed for an idealized Catholic old regime.

Especially during the Third Republic and Vichy (from 1870 to 1944), their noxious blend of anti-republicanism and anti-Semitism was a powerful force in French life, and had particular influence in certain venerable institutions: the church, the army, the bar, and, not least, the Quai d'Orsay. But we should still not exaggerate its overall extent, or its strength. Except in 1940, when the reactionaries had the weight of a distinctly non-French institution behind them—the Wehrmacht—they never managed to impose their ideas on French society as a whole.

It was the republican tradition that mostly prevailed, and for all its faults, under its aegis French Jews enjoyed a remarkable degree of success and influence. They continue to do so today, despite the rising anti-Semitism of the poor

banlieux and the likes of Jean-Marie Le Pen. Three Jews—Léon Blum, Pierre Mendès-France, and Laurent Fabius—have become head of government in France, which is three more than have acceded to that position in the United States. The presidential election of 2007 could well pit a Jewish Socialist, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, against a conservative of Jewish ancestry, Nicolas Sarkozy.

I also wonder how much France's diplomacy has had to do with its current predicament vis-à-vis its large, discontented, and radicalizing Muslim community. A similar predicament faces many other Western European states: how to make alienated Muslim immigrants and their children feel like fully integrated members of the nation, and how to convince them to accept the full obligations of secular, democratic citizenship. In this respect, France may not be so different from a country like Norway, despite Norway's lack of an imperial tradition, a large native Jewish population, or anything like the Quai d'Orsay.

France's diplomatic tradition certainly influences the way the French *talk* about the problem, but how much difference does it make, ultimately, to the stubbornly difficult situation on the ground? As Mr. Pryce-Jones himself notes, all the Quai d'Orsay's wretched appeasement of Arab leaders, right down to Jacques Chirac's embarrassing courtship of Saddam Hussein, has not made the slightest impression on the resentful Muslim teenagers in the wretched housing projects that surround every major French city. If only

the Quai d'Orsay had been as irrelevant in other arenas as it has been in this one!

DAVID A. BELL
*Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland*

DAVID PRYCE-JONES
writes:

I have some sympathy for Ambassador Levitte as he sets about the task of (to quote the job description offered by a British diplomat long ago) lying abroad for his country. Whatever his instructions from the Quai d'Orsay, this case is hopeless for him. Nowhere did I write "descriptions of France as anti-Semitic"—as if a country, rather than people within it, could be any such thing. Instead, I documented the hostility toward Jews of one particular institution, and let the record speak for itself.

For Ambassador Levitte to claim that he cannot select any inaccuracies or errors for fear of appearing to accept others is rather comical. Let me do what I can to help him. In the course of checking a French translation of my essay, I found that Max Chottier's report from Salonika should be dated 1911, not 1912. Paul-Louis Weiller was not Paul Claudel's son-in-law, as I wrote; rather, he and Claudel's son had married sisters, and were therefore brothers-in-law. Finally, Henri Ponsot's 1945 report on the "Jewish question" should be dated April 22, not April 15. These slips are indeed regrettable, if also too trivial to affect the argument or to provoke spluttering about "utter dishonesty."

When I wrote that Arab aggression "in the last decades" had been accompanied by occasional loss of life, I was thinking of the

Palestinian attacks in the Rue Copernic in Paris on October 3, 1980, in which four Jews were killed (and 30 injured) and in the Rue des Rosiers on August 9, 1982, in which six Jews were killed (and 22 injured). On the former occasion, Raymond Barre, then the prime minister of France, said that "two innocent French people were killed" as well, which put the dead Jews well and truly in their place as far as he was concerned. I doubt that the Ambassador can have led so sheltered a life that these events have passed him by entirely.

An Oxford philosopher once earned his share of immortality by saying in a lecture, "To put the matter more obscurely . . ." So it is with Esther Benbassa. My essay addressed the record of the Quai d'Orsay and did not—could not—set "Muslim-Jewish tensions in a multicultural and multiethnic context," which is anyhow a phrase so imprecise and vogueish as to be without meaning. Contrary to her assertion, France's attitude toward its minorities has been simplicity itself. Nor did I set out to write about the attitude of the French Jewish elite—although, again contrary to her assertion, that elite ever since the Rothschilds and Bernard Lazare has been quite as much Zionist as anti-Zionist.

Peaceful and fruitful co-existence between Jews and Arabs in France is to be desired, and I concur with Esther Benbassa that a drastic revision of French policy toward these groups is a matter of urgency. But she seems to be suggesting that both groups make a similar mistake in connection with their identity, the one tend-

ing “to gather symbolically around an imagined Muslim community” (whatever *that* vogueish phrase may mean) and the other supporting Israel. But the groups are not on an equal footing. The Muslim community, real or imagined, is under no external threat, while Israel is in a fight for its survival in a hostile Muslim environment. Evidently she means to target those French Jewish intellectuals—“certain milieus,” be it noted, rather than named persons—who, unlike her, support Zionism. The subject of the Quai d’Orsay is not a suitable battleground for this private quarrel of hers.

I can assure Robert O. Paxton that the archives of the British foreign office do indeed provide plentiful evidence of stupidity and racism, but nothing like the prejudice of the Quai d’Orsay that has served French interests so poorly and set Arabs and Jews against one another. But it is no sort of argument to shout *tu quoque* as he does. Besides, it is not so long ago that, in his own excellent and timely writings, Mr. Paxton was leading the field in criticizing aspects of French policy. It is most doubtful that there is a fashion to single out France as systematically evil; but if there is, he did his bit to launch it.

David A. Bell has generous and thoughtful remarks to make. It may well be that diplomats everywhere are not so influential as they make themselves out to be. Still, the historic illusions of the Quai d’Orsay have helped to create and perpetuate contradictions in the state’s handling of Arabs and Jews on a scale—and in the face of a steadily gathering

threat—quite unknown in lucky little Norway.

The Vision Thing

TO THE EDITOR:

Wilfred M. McClay correctly identifies George W. Bush’s “religious fervor”—and, even more, the sincerity of belief animating that fervor—as what liberals loathe most about the President [“Bush’s Calling,” June]. Bush’s undaunted embrace of the Gospel message appeals not only to millions of evangelicals and conservative people of faith but also to many “non-believers” who, while not sharing the President’s religiosity, appreciate the values of freedom and personal responsibility at the heart of it.

I participated in the December 1999 presidential primary debate in Des Moines, Iowa, and well remember the hush that came over the room when Bush identified Christ—as I did—as his favorite philosopher, explaining simply, “because He changed my heart.” This answer is the key to understanding not only the President’s interior spirituality but his governing philosophy as well. After spending many years “on the road to nowhere” (as Mr. McClay writes), Bush suddenly recognized the need to reform his life and take responsibility for his actions.

Mr. McClay points out that “the animating ideal of evangelicalism is the freely choosing individual.” But, as he also acknowledges, freedom’s necessary companion is restraint. The President understands what authentic freedom means;

it is the foundation of his governing philosophy—the true Bush Doctrine.

Mr. McClay also states that elements of Bush’s agenda—from his program to fight AIDS in Africa to his faith-based initiative—have made the President “something of a progressive.” American conservatism has experienced a similar awakening, whereby progress—the “territory long claimed by liberals as their exclusive property”—has come to be more closely associated with the Republican party. From the pursuit of democracy abroad to creating an “ownership society” and defending human dignity at home, Republicans, as Karl Rove recently asserted, “have seized the mantle of idealism and reform from the Democrats.” This perhaps is Mr. McClay’s most important

point: liberals also despise the President because his approach to governance “picks up where they left off.”

Bush is proof positive that faith is a force for good in politics, because the values and principles necessary for living a mature and responsible faith are the same ones required for mature and responsible governance.

GARY L. BAUER

American Values
Arlington, Virginia

WILFRED M. MCCLAY
writes:

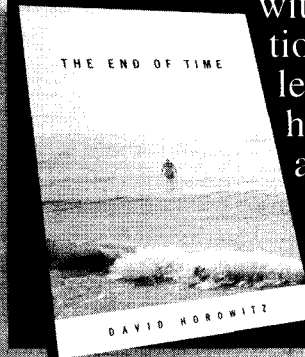
I am grateful to Gary L. Bauer for his generous response to my article. Since he and I both share the President’s faith, I think it is especially important to stress that, although the sources of Bush’s ideas are clearly religious, they do not depend on religious assent for their

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cogency and wide appeal, since they are so consonant with the broad mainstream of American history.

Unfortunately, I fear that it will take years, perhaps even decades, before the visceral disdain for this President felt in so many centers of influence subsides enough to allow the remarkable coherence in his vision to be fully visible. As Mr. Bauer well knows, it would not be the first time in recent American history that an energetic conservative President has been so treated—shabbily by his most vocal contemporaries, and then quite differently by history.

Classical Music

TO THE EDITOR:

Reviewing Joseph Horowitz's book, *Classical Music in America*, Terry Teachout agrees with the author that the blame for the failure of modern music to take root in the repertoires of American orchestras lies with European-born conductors, like Arturo Toscanini, who were hostile to American music and to new music in general ["Singing the Classical-Music Blues," April]. Quoting Horowitz, Mr. Teachout writes: "It was Toscanini's example that would be followed by most conductors of the 1930's and after," as a result of which "American orchestras became musical museums that were 'preponderantly curatorial . . . disproportionately dedicated to masterpieces of the past.'"

But the New York Philharmonic was founded, in 1842, to be such a museum. That was a time when many European orchestras were

ignoring Beethoven and Mozart in favor of third-rate contemporaries like Carl Reissiger and Ferdinand Ries. By the 1930's, Toscanini's indifference to most new music was in fact atypical, and he never became a model. American orchestras under European-born conductors played a great deal of new American music—partly as a gesture of gratitude to their host country, and partly out of the suspicion that America, as a rising political power, might also be a rising musical power. Often the works of local composers were played. Thus, between 1896 and 1930, the Boston Symphony Orchestra performed a hefty 18 pieces by the city's own George Whitefield Chadwick.

New music, American and otherwise, is still played by our orchestras. If, despite that, the latter still seem like museums, it is because only older, established pieces get performed from one season to the next. To understand why modern works ultimately fail, one must recognize the dominant influence of the university in the creation and appraisal of contemporary music.

Before Schoenberg, composers considered themselves part of the general public and wrote for the public. So did—and this is a key point—nearly every music historian. When Ernest Newman's first book came out in 1895, the man who would become perhaps the most brilliant writer about music in English worked as a bank clerk. Today's music histories are not written by knowledgeable amateurs like Newman who take the taste of the educated public seriously. They are written by professors imbued with the jealous, if-it's-popular-it-

must-be-bad attitude of the university.

When contemporary composers read these books, they notice that the popular Gershwin and Rachmaninoff are routinely sneered at while the beyond-dull likes of Milton Babbitt and Elliot Carter get a lot of ink and snap up the lucrative commissions. The music they write thus tends to sound more like the latter than the former. Our conductors, too, read these books and, wishing to be forward-looking and progressive, arrange for such works to be written and performed. It is a vicious cycle.

ROGER KOLB

Somerville, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

Terry Teachout remarks that "classical radio stations are fast becoming a thing of the past." This is quite true; let me suggest how it happens. Commentators like Mr. Teachout imply that jazz is on a par with classical music, indeed is a subset of it. Classical stations begin to play some jazz, and are gratified by increased audience interest. They schedule more jazz and even hire personnel who are knowledgeable about it. If the station is commercial, advertising revenue grows as the size of the audience increases. Then, when listeners complain that the station still plays so much "highbrow" stuff—Beethoven, Shostakovich, and the like—classical content is reduced and further reduced until it is completely eliminated.

I do not know how to reverse this sad trend, because the less young people are exposed to good music, the less they care about it. The issue is not American music versus the standard Euro-

pean repertoire; it is good music versus bad.

ANDREW SANDERS

Toronto, Canada

TO THE EDITOR:

Terry Teachout's article fails to emphasize a fundamental factor behind the contemporary decline in musical taste and awareness: the almost total collapse of music education in the schools, both public and private.

PAUL A. SNOOCK

Jersey City, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

Nowadays, almost all classical-music lovers hear most of their music in electronically reproduced and "amplified" fashion. This means that live classical concerts are simply not loud enough to produce the impact we have grown accustomed to with our stereos and portable players.

One way to increase attendance at classical concerts would be to amplify them. Even the most callow audience member could not fail to be impressed by the *Symphonie Fantastique* played as loud as the typical big-screen Hollywood film. Live acoustic music without amplification, even when played by full-sized symphony orchestras, simply does not cut it anymore. It is time for the classical-performing world to face the music and bring in the sound engineers.

JOSEPH VOS

Edmonton, Canada

TERRY TEACHOUT writes:

I think Roger Kolb may be overestimating the extent to which major American orchestras other than Serge Koussevitzky's Boston Symphony and Leopold Stokowski's Philadelphia Or-

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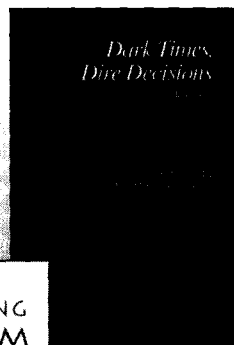
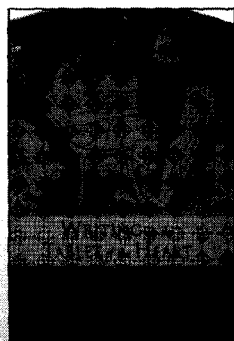
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chestra were playing new American music in the 30's. Some were, some weren't, and in any case the spigot tightened up over time.

He is, however, absolutely right about the reason why "modern works ultimately fail." Longtime readers of COMMENTARY will hardly need reminding of my passionate opposition to the unlistenable music of the American professoriat. The collapse of the avant-garde monopoly has pretty much broken that "vicious cycle" (though James Levine seems to be doing his misguided best to start it up again in Boston!), but the damage to the public trust from all those years of pointlessly ugly premieres is still in need of repair.

Andrew Sanders's letter puzzles me. I do not know whether the process he describes is happening in Canada, but his description

bears no resemblance whatsoever to what is happening in the United States, where public-radio stations are walking away from *all* forms of music, not just classical. Needless to say, this process has nothing to do with the relative merits of jazz and classical music. If I read Mr. Sanders rightly, though, he thinks jazz is "bad" music, in which case we must agree to disagree—violently.

Paul A. Snoock, on the other hand, is dead right. The decline of music education in America is a shameful business whose long-term consequences will be dire indeed—though that, I think, is another story, one that postdates the main line of Joseph Horowitz's narrative.

As for Joseph Vos, I sincerely hope he is making a Modest Proposal. Now that even Broadway pit orchestras are amplified to the

brink of the threshold of pain, the last thing I want is for the New York Philharmonic to get into the act. Berlioz and Wagner at full blast are quite loud enough without benefit of microphones, thank you very much.

Rules of Law

TO THE EDITOR:

May I amplify Dan Seligman's excellent review of Mark R. Levin's *Men in Black: How the Supreme Court Is Destroying America* [Books in Review, June]? The problem of "activism" by the Supreme Court is due in large part to the bipartisan cowardice of Congress. The framers of the Constitution were aware of the risks of a runaway Supreme Court and gave Congress the authority to override it and

even to curtail its powers.

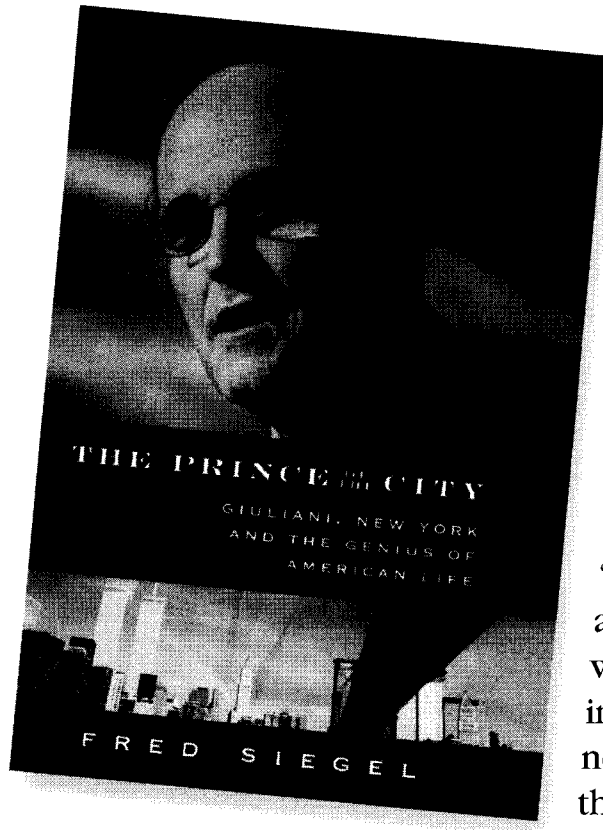
Thus, the Constitution gives Congress the right to limit the Supreme Court's appellate jurisdiction; to appropriate funds for the judicial branch; to confirm (by vote of the Senate) the President's judicial nominees; to define the jurisdiction of the lower federal courts; to impeach, try, and remove delinquent Justices; and to decide how many Justices there shall be.

These powers, wrote Alexander Hamilton in *The Federalist*, were "a complete security" against the danger of "judiciary encroachments on the legislative authority." If Congress were to exercise them, there would be no need for a constitutional amendment providing a legislative veto over Supreme Court decisions, as has been proposed by Mark Levin and others.

ARNOLD BEICHMAN
*Hoover Institution
Stanford, California*

The Prince of the City

Giuliani, New York, and the Genius of American Life



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The Inequality Taboo

Charles Murray

WHEN THE late Richard Herrnstein and I published *The Bell Curve* eleven years ago, the furor over its discussion of ethnic differences in IQ was so intense that most people who have not read the book still think it was about race. Since then, I have deliberately not published anything about group differences in IQ, mostly to give the real topic of *The Bell Curve*—the role of intelligence in reshaping America's class structure—a chance to surface.

The Lawrence Summers affair last January made me rethink my silence. The president of Harvard University offered a few mild, speculative, off-the-record remarks about innate differences between men and women in their aptitude for high-level science and mathematics, and was treated by Harvard's faculty as if he were a crank. The typical news story portrayed the idea of innate sex differences as a renegade position that reputable scholars rejected.

It was depressingly familiar. In the autumn of 1994, I had watched with dismay as *The Bell Curve*'s scientifically unremarkable statements about black IQ were successfully labeled as racist pseudoscience. At the opening of 2005, I watched as some scientifically unremarkable statements about male-

female differences were successfully labeled as sexist pseudoscience.

The Orwellian disinformation about innate group differences is not wholly the media's fault. Many academics who are familiar with the state of knowledge are afraid to go on the record. Talking publicly can dry up research funding for senior professors and can cost assistant professors their jobs. But while the public's misconception is understandable, it is also getting in the way of clear thinking about American social policy.

Good social policy can be based on premises that have nothing to do with scientific truth. The premise that is supposed to undergird all of our social policy, the founders' assertion of an unalienable right to liberty, is not a falsifiable hypothesis. But specific policies based on premises that conflict with scientific truths about human beings tend not to work. Often they do harm.

One such premise is that the distribution of innate abilities and propensities is the same across different groups. The statistical tests for uncovering job discrimination assume that men are not innately different from women, blacks from whites, older people from younger people, homosexuals from heterosexuals, Latinos from Anglos, in ways that can legitimately affect employment decisions. Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 assumes that women are no different from men in their attraction to sports. Affirmative action in all its forms assumes there are no innate differences

CHARLES MURRAY is the W.H. Brady Scholar for Freedom and Culture at the American Enterprise Institute. His previous contributions to COMMENTARY, including "The Bell Curve and Its Critics" (May 1995, with a subsequent exchange in the August 1995 issue), can be found at www.commentarymagazine.com.

between any of the groups it seeks to help and everyone else. The assumption of no innate differences among groups suffuses American social policy. That assumption is wrong.

When the outcomes that these policies are supposed to produce fail to occur, with one group falling short, the fault for the discrepancy has been assigned to society. It continues to be assumed that better programs, better regulations, or the right court decisions can make the differences go away. That assumption is also wrong.

Hence this essay. Most of the following discussion describes reasons for believing that some group differences are intractable. I shift from "innate" to "intractable" to acknowledge how complex is the interaction of genes, their expression in behavior, and the environment. "Intractable" means that, whatever the precise partitioning of causation may be (we seldom know), policy interventions can only tweak the difference at the margins.

I will focus on two sorts of differences: between men and women and between blacks and whites. Here are three crucial points to keep in mind as we go along:

1. The differences I discuss involve means and distributions. In all cases, the variation within groups is greater than the variation between groups. On psychological and cognitive dimensions, some members of both sexes and all races fall everywhere along the range. One implication of this is that genius does not come in one color or sex, and neither does any other human ability. Another is that a few minutes of conversation with individuals you meet will tell you much more about them than their group membership does.

2. Covering both sex differences and race differences in a single, non-technical article, I have had to leave out much. I urge that readers with questions consult the fully annotated version of this essay, which includes extensive supplementary material; it is available at www.commentarymagazine.com and at www.aei.org.

3. The concepts of "inferiority" and "superiority" are inappropriate to group comparisons. On most specific human attributes, it is possible to specify a continuum running from "low" to "high," but the results cannot be combined into a score running from "bad" to "good." What is the best score on a continuum measuring aggressiveness? What is the relative importance of verbal skills versus, say, compassion? Of spatial skills versus industriousness? The aggregate excellences and shortcomings of human groups do not lend themselves to simple comparisons. That is why the

members of just about every group can so easily conclude that they are God's chosen people. All of us use the weighting system that favors our group's strengths.

II

THE TECHNICAL literature documenting sex differences and their biological basis grew surreptitiously during feminism's heyday in the 1970's and 1980's. By the 1990's, it had become so extensive that the bibliography in David Geary's pioneering *Male, Female* (1998) ran to 53 pages. Currently, the best short account of the state of knowledge is Steven Pinker's chapter on gender in *The Blank Slate* (2002).*

Rather than present a telegraphic list of all the differences that I think have been established, I will focus on the narrower question at the heart of the Summers controversy: as groups, do men and women differ innately in characteristics that produce achievement at the highest levels of accomplishment? I will limit my comments to the arts and sciences.

Since we live in an age when students are likely to hear more about Marie Curie than about Albert Einstein, it is worth beginning with a statement of historical fact: women have played a proportionally tiny part in the history of the arts and sciences.[†] Even in the 20th century, women got only 2 percent of the Nobel Prizes in the sciences—a proportion constant for both halves of the century—and 10 percent of the prizes in literature. The Fields Medal, the most prestigious award in mathematics, has been given to 44 people since it originated in 1936. All have been men.

The historical reality of male dominance of the greatest achievements in science and the arts is not open to argument. The question is whether the social and legal exclusion of women is a sufficient ex-

* A non-technical book-length treatment is *Taking Sex Differences Seriously* (2004) by Steven Rhoads. Diane Halpern's *Sex Differences in Cognitive Ability* (2000) is a good one-volume discussion of cognitive differences between the sexes. An up-to-date summary of neuro-physiological findings about sex differences in the brain appeared in last May's *Scientific American* ("His Brain, Her Brain," by Larry Cahill). Simon Baron-Cohen's *The Essential Difference* (2003) is an ambitious attempt to tie together known sex differences into an overall theory. Those who want to compare these accounts with defenses of the no-innate-differences position can look at Virginia Valian's *Why So Slow?* (1999) and a set of essays weighted toward social explanations in *Gender Differences in Mathematics* (2005), edited by Ann Gallagher and James Kaufman.

[†] In my *Human Accomplishment: The Pursuit of Excellence in the Arts and Sciences, 800 B.C. to 1950* (2003), I estimated that women account for 2 percent of the significant contributors. Others have found similar proportions.

planation for this situation, or whether sex-specific characteristics are also at work.

Mathematics offers an entry point for thinking about the answer. Through high school, girls earn better grades in math than boys, but the boys usually do better on standardized tests. The difference in means is modest, but the male advantage increases as the focus shifts from means to extremes. In a large sample of mathematically gifted youths, for example, seven times as many males as females scored in the top percentile of the SAT mathematics test. We do not have good test data on the male-female ratio at the top one-hundredth or top one-thousandth of a percentile, where first-rate mathematicians are most likely to be found, but collateral evidence suggests that the male advantage there continues to increase, perhaps exponentially.

Evolutionary biologists have some theories that feed into an explanation for the disparity. In primitive societies, men did the hunting, which often took them far from home. Males with the ability to recognize landscapes from different orientations and thereby find their way back had a survival advantage. Men who could process trajectories in three dimensions—the trajectory, say, of a spear thrown at an edible mammal—also had a survival advantage. Women did the gathering. Those who could distinguish among complex arrays of vegetation, remembering which were the poisonous plants and which the nourishing ones, also had a survival advantage. Thus the logic for explaining why men should have developed elevated three-dimensional visuospatial skills and women an elevated ability to remember objects and their relative locations—differences that show up in specialized tests today.

Perhaps this is a just-so story. Why not instead attribute the results of these tests to socialization? Enter the neuroscientists. It has been known for years that, even after adjusting for body size, men have larger brains than women. Yet most psychometricians conclude that men and women have the same mean IQ (although debate on this issue is growing). One hypothesis for explaining this paradox is that three-dimensional processing absorbs the extra male capacity. In the last few years, magnetic-resonance imaging has refined the evidence for this hypothesis, revealing that parts of the brain's parietal cortex associated with space perception are proportionally bigger in men than in women.

What does space perception have to do with scores on math tests? Enter the psychometricians, who demonstrate that when visuospatial ability is taken into account, the sex difference in SAT math scores shrinks substantially.

Why should the difference be so much greater at the extremes than at the mean? Part of the answer is that men consistently exhibit higher variance than women on all sorts of characteristics, including visuospatial abilities, meaning that there are proportionally more men than women at both ends of the bell curve. Another part of the answer is that someone with a high verbal IQ can easily master the basic algebra, geometry, and calculus that make up most of the items in an ordinary math test. Elevated visuospatial skills are most useful for the most difficult items. If males have an advantage in answering those comparatively few really hard items, the increasing disparity at the extremes becomes explicable.

Seen from one perspective, this pattern demonstrates what should be obvious: there is nothing inherent in being a woman that precludes high math ability. But there remains a distributional difference in male and female characteristics that leads to a larger number of men with high visuospatial skills. The difference has an evolutionary rationale, a physiological basis, and a direct correlation with math scores.

NOW PUT all this alongside the historical data on accomplishment in the arts and sciences. In test scores, the male advantage is most pronounced in the most abstract items. Historically, too, it is most pronounced in the most abstract domains of accomplishment.

In the humanities, the most abstract field is philosophy—and no woman has been a significant original thinker in any of the world's great philosophical traditions. In the sciences, the most abstract field is mathematics, where the number of great women mathematicians is approximately two (Emmy Noether definitely, Sonya Kovalevskaya maybe). In the other hard sciences, the contributions of great women scientists have usually been empirical rather than theoretical, with leading cases in point being Henrietta Leavitt, Dorothy Hodgkin, Lise Meitner, Irène Joliot-Curie, and Marie Curie herself.

In the arts, literature is the least abstract and by far the most rooted in human interaction; visual art incorporates a greater admixture of the abstract; musical composition is the most abstract of all the arts, using neither words nor images. The role of women has varied accordingly. Women have been represented among great writers virtually from the beginning of literature, in East Asia and South Asia as well as in the West. Women have produced a smaller number of important visual artists, and

none that is clearly in the first rank. No female composer is even close to the first rank. Social restrictions undoubtedly damped down women's contributions in all of the arts, but the pattern of accomplishment that did break through is strikingly consistent with what we know about the respective strengths of male and female cognitive repertoires.

Women have their own cognitive advantages over men, many of them involving verbal fluency and interpersonal skills. If this were a comprehensive survey, detailing those advantages would take up as much space as I have devoted to a particular male advantage. But, sticking with my restricted topic, I will move to another aspect of male-female differences that bears on accomplishment at the highest levels of the arts and sciences: motherhood.

Regarding women, men, and babies, the technical literature is as unambiguous as everyday experience would lead one to suppose. As a rule, the experience of parenthood is more profoundly life-altering for women than for men. Nor is there anything unique about humans in this regard. Mammalian reproduction generally involves much higher levels of maternal than paternal investment in the raising of children. Among humans, extensive empirical study has demonstrated that women are more attracted to children than are men, respond to them more intensely on an emotional level, and get more and different kinds of satisfactions from nurturing them. Many of these behavioral differences have been linked with biochemical differences between men and women.

Thus, for reasons embedded in the biochemistry and neurophysiology of being female, many women with the cognitive skills for achievement at the highest level also have something else they want to do in life: have a baby. In the arts and sciences, forty is the mean age at which peak accomplishment occurs, preceded by years of intense effort mastering the discipline in question. These are precisely the years during which most women must bear children if they are to bear them at all.

Among women who have become mothers, the possibilities for high-level accomplishment in the arts and sciences shrink because, for innate reasons, the distractions of parenthood are greater. To put it in a way that most readers with children will recognize, a father can go to work and forget about his children for the whole day. Hardly any mother can do this, no matter how good her day-care arrangement or full-time nanny may be. My point is not that women must choose between a career and children, but that accomplishment at the extremes

commonly comes from a single-minded focus that leaves no room for anything but the task at hand. We should not be surprised or dismayed to find that motherhood reduces the proportion of highly talented young women who are willing to make that trade-off.

Some numbers can be put to this observation through a study of nearly 2,000 men and women who were identified as extraordinarily talented in math at age thirteen and were followed up 20 years later. The women in the sample came of age in the 1970's and early 1980's, when women were actively socialized to resist gender stereotypes. In many ways, these talented women did resist. By their early thirties, both the men and women had become exceptional achievers, receiving advanced degrees in roughly equal proportions. Only about 15 percent of the women were full-time housewives. Among the women, those who did and those who did not have children were equally satisfied with their careers.

And yet. The women with careers were four-and-a-half times more likely than men to say they preferred to work fewer than 40 hours per week. The men placed greater importance on "being successful in my line of work" and "inventing or creating something that will have an impact," while the women found greater value in "having strong friendships," "living close to parents and relatives," and "having a meaningful spiritual life." As the authors concluded, "these men and women appear to have constructed satisfying and meaningful lives that took somewhat different forms." The different forms, which directly influence the likelihood that men will dominate at the extreme levels of achievement, are consistent with a constellation of differences between men and women that have biological roots.

I have omitted perhaps the most obvious reason why men and women differ at the highest levels of accomplishment: men take more risks, are more competitive, and are more aggressive than women. The word "testosterone" may come to mind, and appropriately. Much technical literature documents the hormonal basis of personality differences that bear on sex differences in extreme and venturesome effort, and hence in extremes of accomplishment—and that bear as well on the male propensity to produce an overwhelming proportion of the world's crime and approximately 100 percent of its wars.

But this is just one more of the ways in which science is demonstrating that men and women are really and truly different, a fact so obvious that only intellectuals could ever have thought otherwise.

III

TURNING TO race, we must begin with the fraught question of whether it even exists, or whether it is instead a social construct. The Harvard geneticist Richard Lewontin originated the idea of race as a social construct in 1972, arguing that the genetic differences across races were so trivial that no scientist working exclusively with genetic data would sort people into blacks, whites, or Asians. In his words, “racial classification is now seen to be of virtually no genetic or taxonomic significance.”

Lewontin’s position, which quickly became a tenet of political correctness, carried with it a potential means of being falsified. If he was correct, then a statistical analysis of genetic markers would not produce clusters corresponding to common racial labels.

In the last few years, that test has become feasible, and now we know that Lewontin was wrong. Several analyses have confirmed the genetic reality of group identities going under the label of race or ethnicity. In the most recent, published this year, all but five of the 3,636 subjects fell into the cluster of genetic markers corresponding to their self-identified ethnic group. When a statistical procedure, blind to physical characteristics and working exclusively with genetic information, classifies 99.9 percent of the individuals in a large sample in the same way they classify themselves, it is hard to argue that race is imaginary.

Homo sapiens actually falls into many more interesting groups than the bulky ones known as “races.” As new findings appear almost weekly, it seems increasingly likely that we are just at the beginning of a process that will identify all sorts of genetic differences among groups, whether the groups being compared are Nigerian blacks and Kenyan blacks, lawyers and engineers, or Episcopalians and Baptists. At the moment, the differences that are obviously genetic involve diseases (Ashkenazi Jews and Tay-Sachs disease, black Africans and sickle-cell anemia, Swedes and hemochromatosis). As time goes on, we may yet come to understand better why, say, Italians are more vivacious than Scots.

Out of all the interesting and intractable differences that may eventually be identified, one in particular remains a hot button like no other: the IQ difference between blacks and whites. What is the present state of our knowledge about it?

There is no technical dispute on some of the core issues. In the aftermath of *The Bell Curve*, the American Psychological Association established a task force on intelligence whose report was pub-

lished in early 1996. The task force reached the same conclusions as *The Bell Curve* on the size and meaningfulness of the black-white difference. Historically, it has been about one standard deviation in magnitude among subjects who have reached adolescence*; cultural bias in IQ tests does not explain the difference; and the tests are about equally predictive of educational, social, and economic outcomes for blacks and whites. However controversial such assertions may still be in the eyes of the mainstream media, they are not controversial within the scientific community.

The most important change in the state of knowledge since the mid-1990’s lies in our increased understanding of what has happened to the size of the black-white difference over time. Both the task force and *The Bell Curve* concluded that some narrowing had occurred since the early 1970’s. With the advantage of an additional decade of data, we are now able to be more precise: (1) The black-white difference in scores on educational achievement tests has narrowed significantly. (2) The black-white convergence in scores on the most highly “g-loaded” tests—the tests that are the best measures of cognitive ability—has been smaller, and may be unchanged, since the first tests were administered 90 years ago.

WITH REGARD to the difference in educational achievement, the narrowing of scores on major tests occurred in the 1970’s and 80’s. In the case of the SAT, the gaps in the verbal and math tests as of 1972 were 1.24 and 1.26 standard deviations respectively. By 1991, when the gaps were smallest (they have risen slightly since then), those numbers had dropped by .37 and .35 standard deviations.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which is not limited to college-bound students, is preferable to the SAT for estimating nationally representative trends, but the story it tells is similar. Among students ages nine, thirteen, and seventeen, the black-white differences in math as of the first NAEP test in 1973 were 1.03, 1.29, and 1.24 standard deviations respectively. For nine-year-olds, the difference hit its all-time low of .73 standard deviations in 2004, a drop of .30 standard deviations. But almost all of that convergence had been reached by 1986, when the gap was .78

* The standard deviation is a statistic that (slightly simplified) expresses the average difference of all the scores from the mean. Given a normal distribution—a bell curve—someone who is one standard deviation above the mean is at the 84th percentile. Two standard deviations above the mean puts that person at the 98th percentile. IQ tests are normed to have a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15.

standard deviations. For thirteen-year-olds, the gap dropped by .45 standard deviations, reaching its low in 1986. For seventeen-year-olds, the gap dropped by .52 standard deviations, reaching its low in 1990.

In the reading test, the comparable gaps for ages nine, thirteen, and seventeen as of the first NAEP test in 1971 were 1.12, 1.17, and 1.25 standard deviations. Those gaps had shrunk by .38, .62, and .68 standard deviations respectively at their lowest points in 1988. They have since remained effectively unchanged.

An analysis by Larry Hedges and Amy Nowell uses a third set of data, examining the trends for high-school seniors by comparing six large data bases from different time periods from 1965 to 1992. The black-white difference on a combined measure of math, vocabulary, and reading fell from 1.18 to .82 standard deviations in that time, a reduction of .36 standard deviations.

So black and white academic achievement converged significantly in the 1970's and 1980's, typically by more than a third of a standard deviation, and since then has stayed about the same. What about convergence in tests explicitly designed to measure IQ rather than academic achievement? The ambiguities in the data leave two defensible positions. The first is that the IQ difference is about one standard deviation, effectively unchanged since the first black-white comparisons 90 years ago. The second is that harbingers of a narrowing difference are starting to emerge. I cannot settle the argument here, but I can convey some sense of the uncertainty.

THE CASE for an unchanged black-white IQ difference is straightforward. If you take all the black-white differences on IQ tests from the first ones in World War I up to the present, there is no statistically significant downward trend. Of course the results vary, because tests vary in the precision with which they measure the general mental factor (*g*) and samples vary in their size and representativeness. But results continue to center around a black-white difference of about 1.0 to 1.1 standard deviations through the most recent data.

The case for a reduction has two important recent results to work with. The first is from the 1997 re-norming of the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT), which showed a black-white difference of .97 standard deviations. Since the typical difference on paper-and-pencil IQ tests like the AFQT has been about 1.10 standard deviations, the 1997 results represent noticeable improvement.

The second positive result comes from the 2003

standardization sample for the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-IV), which showed a difference of .78 standard deviations, as against the 1.0 difference that has been typical for individually administered IQ tests.

One cannot draw strong conclusions from two data points. Those who interpret them as part of an unchanging overall pattern can cite another recent result, from the 2001 standardization of the Woodcock-Johnson intelligence test. In line with the conventional gap, it showed an overall black-white difference of 1.05 standard deviations and, for youths aged six to eighteen, a difference of .99 standard deviations.

There is more to be said on both sides of this issue, but nothing conclusive. Until new data become available, you may take your choice. If you are a pessimist, the gap has been unchanged at about one standard deviation. If you are an optimist, the IQ gap has decreased by a few points, but it is still close to one standard deviation. The clear and substantial convergence that occurred in academic tests has at best been but dimly reflected in IQ scores, and at worst not reflected at all.

WHETHER WE are talking about academic achievement or about IQ, are the causes of the black-white difference environmental or genetic? Everyone agrees that environment plays a part. The controversy is about whether biology is also involved.

It has been known for many years that the obvious environmental factors such as income, parental occupation, and schools explain only part of the absolute black-white difference and none of the relative difference. Black and white students from affluent neighborhoods are separated by as large a proportional gap as are blacks and whites from poor neighborhoods. Thus the most interesting recent studies of environmental causes have worked with cultural explanations instead of socioeconomic status.*

One example is *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement* (2003) by the Berkeley anthropologist John Ogbu, who went to Shaker Heights, Ohio, to explore why

* I put aside here the explanation that has received the most publicity in recent years, the phenomenon labeled "stereotype threat." Its discoverers, Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson, demonstrated experimentally that test performance by academically talented blacks was worse when a test was called an IQ test than when it was innocuously described as a research tool. Press reports erroneously interpreted this as meaning that stereotype threat explained away the black-white difference. In reality, Steele and Aronson showed only that it increases the usual black-white difference; if one eliminates stereotype threat, the usual difference remains.

black students in an affluent suburb should lag behind their white peers. Another is *Black Rednecks and White Liberals* (2005) by Thomas Sowell, who makes the case that what we think of as the dysfunctional aspects of urban black culture are a legacy not of slavery but of Southern and rural white "cracker" culture. Both Ogbu and Sowell describe ingrained parental behaviors and student attitudes that must impede black academic performance. These cultural influences often cut across social classes.

From a theoretical standpoint, the cultural explanations offer fresh ways of looking at the black-white difference at a time when the standard socioeconomic explanations have reached a dead end. From a practical standpoint, however, the cultural explanations point to a cause of the black-white difference that is as impervious to manipulation by social policy as causes rooted in biology. If there is to be a rapid improvement, some form of mass movement with powerful behavioral consequences would have to occur within the black community. Absent that, the best we can hope for is gradual cultural change that is likely to be measured in decades.

This brings us to the state of knowledge about genetic explanations. "There is not much direct evidence on this point," said the American Psychological Association's task force dismissively, "but what little there is fails to support the genetic hypothesis." Actually, there is no direct evidence at all, just a wide variety of indirect evidence, almost all of which the task force chose to ignore.

As it happens, a comprehensive survey of that evidence, and of the objections to it, appeared this past June in the journal *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*. There, J. Philippe Rushton and Arthur Jensen co-authored a 60-page article entitled "Thirty Years of Research on Race Differences in Cognitive Ability." It incorporates studies of East Asians as well as blacks and whites and concludes that the source of the black-white-Asian difference is 50- to 80-percent genetic. The same issue of the journal includes four commentaries, three of them written by prominent scholars who oppose the idea that any part of the black-white difference is genetic. Thus, in one place, you can examine the strongest arguments that each side in the debate can bring to bear.

Rushton and Jensen base their conclusion on ten categories of evidence that are consistent with a model in which both environment and genes cause the black-white difference and inconsistent with a model that requires no genetic contribution. I will not try to review their argument here, or the critiques of it. All of the contributions can be found

on the Internet, and can be understood by readers with a grasp of basic statistical concepts.*

For those who consider it important to know what percentage of the IQ difference is genetic, a methodology that would do the job is now available. In the United States, few people classified as black are actually of 100-percent African descent (the average American black is thought to be about 20-percent white). To the extent that genes play a role, IQ will vary by racial admixture. In the past, studies that have attempted to test this hypothesis have had no accurate way to measure the degree of admixture, and the results have been accordingly muddy. The recent advances in using genetic markers solve that problem. Take a large sample of racially diverse people, give them a good IQ test, and then use genetic markers to create a variable that no longer classifies people as "white" or "black," but along a continuum. Analyze the variation in IQ scores according to that continuum. The results would be close to dispositive.

NONE OF this is important for social policy, however, where the issue is not the source of the difference but its intractability. Much of the evidence reviewed by Rushton and Jensen bears on what we can expect about future changes in the black-white IQ difference. My own thinking on this issue is shaped by the relationship of the difference to a factor I have already mentioned—"g"—and to the developing evidence for g's biological basis.

When you compare black and white mean scores on a battery of subtests, you do not find a uniform set of differences; nor do you find a random assortment. The size of the difference varies systematically by type of subtest. Asked to predict which subtests show the largest difference, most people will think first of ones that have the most cultural content and are the most sensitive to good schooling. But this natural expectation is wrong. Some of the largest differences are found on subtests that have little or no cultural content, such as ones based on abstract designs.

As long ago as 1927, Charles Spearman, the pioneer psychometrician who discovered g, proposed a hypothesis to explain the pattern: the size of the black-white difference would be "most marked in just those [subtests] which are known to be saturated with g." In other words, Spearman conjectured that the black-white difference would be greatest on

* Rushton has posted all of the articles at www.ssc.uwo.ca/psychology/faculty/rushton_pubs.htm.

tests that were the purest measures of intelligence, as opposed to tests of knowledge or memory.

A concrete example illustrates how Spearman's hypothesis works. Two items in the Wechsler and Stanford-Binet IQ tests are known as "forward digit span" and "backward digit span." In the forward version, the subject repeats a random sequence of one-digit numbers given by the examiner, starting with two digits and adding another with each iteration. The subject's score is the number of digits that he can repeat without error on two consecutive trials. Digits-backward works exactly the same way except that the digits must be repeated in the opposite order.

Digits-backward is much more *g*-loaded than digits-forward. Try it yourself and you will see why. Digits-forward is a straightforward matter of short-term memory. Digits-backward makes your brain work much harder.

The black-white difference in digits-backward is about twice as large as the difference in digits-forward. It is a clean example of an effect that resists cultural explanation. It cannot be explained by differential educational attainment, income, or any other socioeconomic factor. Parenting style is irrelevant. Reluctance to "act white" is irrelevant. Motivation is irrelevant. There is no way that any of these variables could systematically encourage black performance in digits-forward while depressing it in digits-backward in the same test at the same time with the same examiner in the same setting.

In 1980, Arthur Jensen began a research program for testing Spearman's hypothesis. In his book *The g Factor* (1998), he summarized the results from seventeen independent sets of data, derived from 149 psychometric tests. They consistently supported Spearman's hypothesis. Subsequent work has added still more evidence. Debate continues about what the correlation between *g*-loadings and the size of the black-white difference means, but the core of Spearman's original conjecture, that a sizable correlation would be found to exist, has been confirmed.

During the same years that Jensen was investigating Spearman's hypothesis, progress was also being made in understanding *g*. For decades, psychometricians had tried to make *g* go away. Confident that intelligence must be more complicated than a single factor, they strove to replace *g* with measures of uncorrelated mental skills. They thereby made valuable contributions to our understanding of intelligence, which really does manifest itself in different ways and with different profiles, but

getting rid of *g* proved impossible. No matter how the data were analyzed, a single factor kept dominating the results.

By the 1980's, the robustness and value of *g* as an explanatory construct were broadly accepted among psychometricians, but little was known about its physiological basis. As of 2005, we know much more. It is now established that *g* is by far the most heritable component of IQ. A variety of studies have found correlations between *g* and physiological phenomena such as brain-evoked potentials, brain pH levels, brain glucose metabolism, nerve-conduction velocity, and reaction time. Most recently, it has been determined that a highly significant relationship exists between *g* and the volume of gray matter in specific areas of the frontal cortex, and that the magnitude of the volume is under tight genetic control. In short, we now know that *g* captures something in the biology of the brain.

SO SPEARMAN's basic conjecture was correct—the size of the black-white difference and *g*-loadings are correlated—and *g* represents a biologically grounded and highly heritable cognitive resource. When those two observations are put together, a number of characteristics of the black-white difference become predictable, correspond with phenomena we have observed in data, and give us reason to think that not much will change in the years to come.

One implication is that black-white convergence on test scores will be greatest on tests that are least *g*-loaded. Literacy is the obvious example: people with a wide range of IQ's can be taught to read competently, and it is the reading test of the NAEP in which convergence has reached its closest point (.55 standard deviations in the 1988 test). More broadly, the confirmation of Spearman's hypothesis explains why the convergence that has occurred on academic achievement tests has not been matched on IQ tests.

A related implication is that the source of the black-white difference lies in skills that are hardest to change. Being able to repeat many digits backward has no value in itself. It points to a valuable underlying mental ability, in the same way that percentage of fast-twitch muscle fibers points to an underlying athletic ability. If you were to practice reciting digits backward for a few days, you could increase your score somewhat, just as training can improve your running speed somewhat. But in neither case will you have improved the underlying ability. As far as anyone knows, *g* itself cannot be coached.

The third implication is that the “Flynn effect” will not close the black-white difference. I am referring here to the secular increase in IQ scores over time, brought to public attention by James Flynn. The Flynn effect has been taken as a reason for thinking that the black-white difference is temporary: if IQ scores are so malleable that they can rise steadily for several decades, why should not the black-white difference be malleable as well?

But as the Flynn effect has been studied over the last decade, the evidence has grown, and now seems persuasive, that the increases in IQ scores do not represent significant increases in *g*. What the increases do represent—whether increases in specific mental skills or merely increased test sophistication—is still being debated. But if the black-white difference is concentrated in *g* and if the Flynn effect does not consist of increases in *g*, the Flynn effect will not do much to close the gap. A 2004 study by Dutch scholars tested this question directly. Examining five large databases, the authors concluded that “the nature of the Flynn effect is qualitatively different from the nature of black-white differences in the United States,” and that “the implications of the Flynn effect for black-white differences appear small.”

These observations represent my reading of a body of evidence that is incomplete, and they will surely have to be modified as we learn more. But taking the story of the black-white IQ difference as a whole, I submit that we know two facts beyond much doubt. First, the conventional environmental explanation of the black-white difference is inadequate. Poverty, bad schools, and racism, which seem such obvious culprits, do not explain it. Insofar as the environment is the cause, it is not the sort of environment we know how to change, and we have tried every practical remedy that anyone has been able to think of. Second, regardless of one’s reading of the competing arguments, we are left with an IQ difference that has, at best, narrowed by only a few points over the last century. I can find nothing in the history of this difference, or in what we have learned about its causes over the last ten years, to suggest that any faster change is in our future.

IV

ELITES THROUGHOUT the West are living a lie, basing the futures of their societies on the assumption that all groups of people are equal in all respects. Lie is a strong word, but justified. It is a lie because so many elite politicians who profess to believe it in public do not believe it in private. It is

a lie because so many elite scholars choose to ignore what is already known and choose not to inquire into what they suspect. We enable ourselves to continue to live the lie by establishing a taboo against discussion of group differences.

The taboo is not perfect—otherwise, I would not have been able to document this essay—but it is powerful. Witness how few of Harvard’s faculty who understood the state of knowledge about sex differences were willing to speak out during the Summers affair. In the public-policy debate, witness the contorted ways in which even the opponents of policies like affirmative action frame their arguments so that no one can accuse them of saying that women are different from men or blacks from whites. Witness the unwillingness of the mainstream media to discuss group differences without assuring readers that the differences will disappear when the world becomes a better place.

The taboo arises from an admirable idealism about human equality. If it did no harm, or if the harm it did were minor, there would be no need to write about it. But taboos have consequences.

The nature of many of the consequences must be a matter of conjecture because people are so fearful of exploring them. Consider an observation furtively voiced by many who interact with civil servants: that government is riddled with people who have been promoted to their level of incompetence because of pressure to have a staff with the correct sex and ethnicity in the correct proportions and positions. Are these just anecdotes? Or should we be worrying about the effects of affirmative action on the quality of government services? It would be helpful to know the answers, but we will not so long as the taboo against talking about group difference prevails.

How much damage has the taboo done to the education of children? Christina Hoff Sommers has argued that willed blindness to the different developmental patterns of boys and girls has led many educators to see boys as aberrational and girls as the norm, with pervasive damage to the way our elementary and secondary schools are run. Is she right? Few have been willing to pursue the issue lest they be required to talk about innate group differences. Similar questions can be asked about the damage done to medical care, whose practitioners have only recently begun to acknowledge the ways in which ethnic groups respond differently to certain drugs.

How much damage has the taboo done to our understanding of America’s social problems? The

part played by sexism in creating the ratio of males to females on mathematics faculties is not the ratio we observe but what remains after adjustment for male-female differences in high-end mathematical ability. The part played by racism in creating different outcomes in black and white poverty, crime, and illegitimacy is not the raw disparity we observe but what remains after controlling for group characteristics. For some outcomes, sex or race differences nearly disappear after a proper analysis is done. For others, a large residual difference remains. In either case, open discussion of group differences would give us a better grasp on where to look for causes and solutions.

WHAT GOOD can come of raising this divisive topic? The honest answer is that no one knows for sure. What we do know is that the taboo has crippled our ability to explore almost any topic that involves the different ways in which groups of people respond to the world around them—which means almost every political, social, or economic topic of any complexity.

Thus my modest recommendation, requiring no change in laws or regulations, just a little more gumption. Let us start talking about group differences openly—all sorts of group differences, from the visuospatial skills of men and women to the vivaciousness of Italians and Scots. Let us talk about the nature of the manly versus the womanly virtues. About differences between Russians and Chinese that might affect their adoption of capitalism. About differences between Arabs and Europeans that might affect the assimilation of Arab immigrants into European democracies. About differences between the poor and non-poor that could inform policy for reducing poverty.

Even to begin listing the topics that could be enriched by an inquiry into the nature of group differences is to reveal how stifled today's conversation is. Besides liberating that conversation, an open and undefensive discussion would puncture the irrational fear of the male-female and black-white differences I have surveyed here. We would be free to talk about other sexual and racial differences as well, many of which favor women and blacks, and none of which is large enough to frighten anyone who looks at them dispassionately.

Talking about group differences does not require any of us to change our politics. For every implication that the Right might seize upon (affirmative-action quotas are ill-conceived), another gives fodder to the Left (innate group differences help ra-

tionalize compensatory redistribution by the state). But if we do not need to change our politics, talking about group differences obligates all of us to renew our commitment to the ideal of equality that Thomas Jefferson had in mind when he wrote as a self-evident truth that all men are created equal. Steven Pinker put that ideal in today's language in *The Blank Slate*, writing that "Equality is not the empirical claim that all groups of humans are interchangeable; it is the moral principle that individuals should not be judged or constrained by the average properties of their group."

Nothing in this essay implies that this moral principle has already been realized or that we are powerless to make progress. In elementary and secondary education, many outcomes are tractable even if group differences in ability remain unchanged. Dropout rates, literacy, and numeracy are all tractable. School discipline, teacher performance, and the quality of the curriculum are tractable. Academic performance within a given IQ range is tractable. The existence of group differences need not and should not discourage attempts to improve schooling for millions of American children who are now getting bad educations.

In university education and in the world of work, overall openness of opportunity has been transformed for the better over the last half-century. But the policies we now have in place are impeding, not facilitating, further progress. Creating double standards for physically demanding jobs so that women can qualify ensures that men in those jobs will never see women as their equals. In universities, affirmative action ensures that the black-white difference in IQ in the population at large is brought onto the campus and made visible to every student. The intentions of their designers notwithstanding, today's policies are perfectly fashioned to create separation, condescension, and resentment—and so they have done.

The world need not be that way. Any university or employer that genuinely applied a single set of standards for hiring, firing, admitting, and promoting would find that performance really is distributed indistinguishably across different groups. But getting to that point nationwide will require us to jettison an apparatus of laws, regulations, and bureaucracies that has been 40 years in the making. That will not happen until the conversation has opened up. So let us take one step at a time. Let us stop being afraid of data that tell us a story we do not want to hear, stop the name-calling, stop the denial, and start facing reality.

Myth, Fact, and the al-Dura Affair

Nidra Poller

THIS PAST June, Wafa Samir al-Bis, an aspiring twenty-one-year-old *shabida*, or “martyr,” was apprehended by Israeli guards at the Erez checkpoint in Gaza and found to be carrying 20 pounds of explosives in her underwear. The young woman intended to make a last trip to the Soroka Medical Center in Be’er Sheva, where she had been receiving medical treatment for severe burns incurred in a domestic accident. Her goal this time was to blow herself up and kill as many young people as possible. Asked why she was aiming specifically at children, she replied that she wanted to retaliate for the death of Muhammad al-Dura.

Wafa Samir al-Bis is but one in a long line of *shabids* and would-be *shabids* inspired by the image of a twelve-year-old Palestinian boy whose death scene was broadcast worldwide at the very onset of the so-called al-Aqsa *intifada* that broke out in September 2000. Televised images of the boy, reportedly killed by Israeli soldiers, instantly ignited anti-Israel and anti-Jewish passions all over the world, provoking a wave of violence from the lynching of two Israeli reservists in Ramallah to synagogue burnings in France. In the ensuing years, the story of Muhammad al-Dura has attained near-mythic stature in the Arab and Mus-

lim world. In the West, though its essence is largely forgotten, it has fired the political imagination of many who accept it as emblematic proof of Israeli culpability for the outbreak of the armed conflict and even for Palestinian “martyrdom operations” against Israel’s civilian population.

The killing of Muhammad al-Dura is not the only long-lived accusation against Israel in the last five years. Another tale of atrocity, perhaps even better known, is the Jenin “massacre.” In the spring of 2002, the Israeli army moved into that West Bank city to wipe out a nest of terrorists responsible for a particularly intense sequence of murder and mayhem. Immediately, Palestinian sources claimed a figure of 5,000 dead (later reduced to a more modest 500) and an entire “refugee camp” bulldozed to rubble. By the time the truth emerged—Palestinians themselves finally confirmed a total of 56 dead, most of them in armed combat, and aerial views demonstrated the pinpoint nature of the Israeli operation—the damage had been done. Still today the Jenin “massacre” endures, out of reach of rational refutation.

But at least there is reliable information on what really happened in Jenin. That is not the case with the death scene of Muhammad al-Dura.

The background can be quickly summarized. In the summer of 2000, even before Yasir Arafat brought down the final curtain on the Oslo “peace process” by rejecting an American-brokered deal at Camp David, reports were circulating of a

NIDRA POLLER, *who lives in Paris, has written for National Review Online, Frontpage, the New York Sun, and other publications. Her essay, “Betrayed by Europe: An Expatriate’s Lament,” appeared in the March 2004 COMMENTARY.*

Palestinian military buildup. The first act of war was the murder of an Israeli soldier by his Palestinian partner on a joint patrol. But this was dismissed as a mere fluke. Instead, the spark that ignited the *intifada* was alleged to be Ariel Sharon's September 28 visit to the Temple Mount, Judaism's most sacred site and also the home of a number of Muslim shrines, including the al-Aqsa mosque.

The next day, September 29, the eve of Rosh Hashanah, riots broke out as Palestinians exiting from Friday prayers in the mosque overran a police post and hurled paving stones, conveniently stockpiled nearby, onto the heads of Jewish worshippers at the Western Wall below. On September 30, Marwan Barghouti, the West Bank leader of Arafat's Fatah organization, asserted that he could not and would not restrain further expressions of Palestinian protest.

It was later on that same day that a cameraman for France-2, a channel of the state-owned French television network, captured the death of a twelve-year-old Palestinian boy, allegedly shot in front of his helpless father by Israeli soldiers in the Gaza Strip. A news report, dramatically narrated by France-2's Jerusalem correspondent, was instantly aired and was offered free of charge to the world's media.

The effect was immediate, electrifying, and global. Overnight, Muhammad al-Dura became the poster child of the incipient Palestinian "struggle" against Israeli "occupation" and a potent symbol of the genocidal intentions of Israel's government. A doctored photomontage was soon produced for Arab-Muslim viewers, featuring an imported image of an Israeli soldier apparently shooting the boy at close range.

That the death of Muhammad al-Dura was the real emotional pretext for the ensuing avalanche of Palestinian violence—and a far more potent trigger than Sharon's "provocative" visit to the Temple Mount—is attested by the immediate and widespread dissemination of his story and of the *pietà*-like image of his body lying at his father's feet. Streets, squares, and schools have since been named for the young Islamic *shahid*. His death scene has been replicated on murals, posters, and postage stamps, even making an iconic appearance in the video of Daniel Pearl's beheading. His story, perhaps the single most powerful force behind the Palestinian cult of child sacrifice over the last years, has been dramatized in spots on Palestinian television urging others to follow in his path, retold in a recruitment video for al Qaeda, and im-

mortalized in epic verse by the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish.

But is it true? Although serious doubts were immediately raised about the veracity of the France-2 news report, they were swept aside by the emotions it provoked and by the flare of violence in the last months of 2000. France-2 indignantly turned down all requests to investigate or even to help others investigate by releasing outtakes. To this day, many people believe that even to raise a doubt about the authenticity of the report is tantamount to denying the reality of the 9/11 attacks on New York City.

But let us begin at the beginning, with France-2's prize-winning scoop, aired just hours after the incident.

HERE IS what viewers saw and heard: a few seconds of rioting somewhere on the West Bank, followed by a vague scene of armed men at Netzarim junction, a crossroads in the Gaza Strip. A jeep comes down the road. A single shot rings out, and a man in uniform at the open door of the jeep falls or jumps to the ground, clutching his right leg. An ambulance pulls up, stops on the far side of the road. The man is dragged across the ground, placed on a stretcher with his weight resting on his wounded right leg, and loaded into the ambulance. Charles Enderlin, France-2's correspondent, announces in an eyewitness-style voiceover:

Three PM at Netzarim junction in the Gaza Strip. A dramatic turn of events. The Palestinians shot live ammunition, the Israelis replied. Ambulance drivers, bystanders, journalists are caught in the crossfire.

Now the camera focuses on a man and a boy crouched behind a concrete barrel or culvert, their faces contorted in fear. Enderlin: "Here Jamal al-Dura and his son are targets of gunfire from Israeli positions." The camera pans to a nearby Israeli outpost. The father waves with his right hand in the direction of the Israeli position. The father is hunched behind the barrel, the boy nestled against his back. Enderlin:

Muhammad is twelve years old. His father tries to protect him. He waves. But another round of fire bursts out. Muhammad is dead, and his father grievously wounded.

During the 55-second sequence, two shots have hit a concrete-block wall that stands like a backdrop for the scene, landing far afield of the father

and son. Other bullet holes, similarly off-target, can be seen in the wall as well. The father shields the boy; the father's arm is clearly visible, perpendicular to the ground. Guttural cries are heard, adding to the feeling of panic. The last round of gunfire kicks up a cloud of dust, obscuring the man and boy. When the dust clears, the boy is stretched out at his father's feet; the father bobs his head as if groggy.

And that was it. As Enderlin would later explain, the reason France-2's scoop was offered free to the world was that the producers did not want to earn a profit from so tragic an incident. Only the terrible moments of the child's death throes, he added, had been edited out, being "too unbearable." The film sequence itself, attributed at first to a "France-2 cameraman," was subsequently identified as the work of the station's Palestinian stringer, Talal Abu Rahmeh. By then, the full authority and reputation of France-2 itself had been indelibly stamped on the footage.

Within days, an elaborate narrative was being disseminated to flesh out the elusive details of the 55-second video. On October 3, 2000, testifying under oath before the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, the cameraman Talal Abu Rahmeh alleged that Israeli soldiers had intentionally, in cold blood, murdered the boy and wounded the father. Abu Rahmeh's testimony was precise and vivid. There had been, he said, a five-minute exchange of fire between Palestinian policemen and Israeli soldiers. This was followed by fully 45 minutes of gunfire coming exclusively from the Israeli position and aimed directly at the man and the boy crouching desperately behind a concrete barrel. According to the cameraman, he had captured on film a total of 27 minutes of this fusillade, risking his own life in the process. As an experienced war photographer, he could attest without hesitation that the Israeli outpost was the only position from which the boy and the man could be hit.

This amplified version of the incident, with slight but significant variations and a wealth of human-interest details, then took on a life of its own, being repeated and embellished in numerous background stories, special reports, and interviews about the tragic fate of the "simple boy from Gaza, who loved birds." In one of these narratives, Jamal and Muhammad were said to have left the El Bureij refugee camp early on the morning of September 30 to visit a used-car market. Finding the market closed, they headed home in a communal taxi, arriving at Netzarim junction shortly before midday. The taxi was blocked by a raging gun bat-

tle, so Jamal decided to go the rest of the way on foot. In an interview on Israeli television, Jamal said that upon entering the crossing he found the firing so heavy that he took refuge behind an up-ended concrete culvert, where he and his son were pinned down for the 45 minutes of relentless gunfire aimed deliberately at them from the Israeli position. He waved to the soldiers, who could see he was an innocent civilian trapped there with a boy; they shot him in the hand. He tried to protect his son with his arm, but they shot him in the arm and shoulder. He tried to protect him with his leg, but they shot him in the leg, smashing his pelvis. The tragic outcome was described for a BBC documentary by Talal Abu Rahmeh: Jamal tried to call for help on his cellphone, asking someone to get the soldiers to stop shooting, or to send an ambulance. The ambulance driver was shot dead. The soldiers kept on shooting until they killed Muhammad, who died either instantly from a fatal wound to the stomach or, in another version, bled to death for 15 to 20 minutes because no ambulance could get through to evacuate him.

In the following weeks, journalists like Suzanne Goldenberg in the (London) *Guardian*, Gilles Paris in *Le Monde*, and dozens of others would write about this incident as if they themselves had been at Netzarim junction on the fatal day.

THE AL-DURA story was so immediately and so deeply harmful to Israel that no matter what government officials might say or do, they only seemed to make matters worse. Enderlin has stated that, before airing the report, he called the IDF spokesman to inform him of the breaking news and to caution him against shirking Israeli responsibility. The soldiers in the fort, however, had reported nothing remotely resembling what Enderlin described, for the simple reason that they had seen nothing. And yet, the first official Israeli statement on the incident included an apology for the death of the boy and a promise to investigate. It took a few days before the IDF concluded that, given the shooting angle from the Israeli position, the man and boy could not have been hit by IDF gunfire. This was treated as adding insult to injury.

Other objections were dismissed with similar contempt. Early on, for example, it was pointed out that the 55-second video did not show any of the normal signs consistent with wounds from high-power bullets. There was no blood on the victims' clothes, on the wall, or on the ground. Their postures appeared wholly voluntary, with no

sign of shock or trauma. As for Abu Rahmeh's claim of a 45-minute free-for-all, experts in ballistics concurred that automatic rifles fired uninterruptedly for that length of time would reduce their victims to shreds, and the concrete block wall behind them to rubble. Nor did such behavior accord with what one knew about the ethics, discipline, and skill of IDF soldiers.

Early doubters of the received version included the French documentary filmmaker Pierre Rehov, who sued France-2 for spreading false information; the case was thrown out of French court. Nahum Shahaf, an Israeli physicist who led the first official IDF investigation, has been studying the incident ever since, accumulating one of the most exhaustive film libraries on the subject. Metula News Agency (MENA), an Israel-based, French-language service, likewise undertook a lengthy and still ongoing investigation. Esther Schapira, a German television producer who went to Israel convinced of IDF guilt, came away with a film exposing the contradictions and discrepancies of the France-2 news report; she was convinced that the boy had been killed by Palestinians. In a June 2003 article in the *Atlantic*, the American journalist James Fallows concluded that Muhammad al-Dura "was not shot by the Israeli soldiers who were known to be involved in the day's fighting," but also that we would never know who killed him.

Was Muhammad al-Dura shot by Israelis? By Palestinians? Perhaps not shot at all? Most attempts to develop a cogent counter-scenario have fallen victim to the tangle of conflicting details and the sheer accumulation of minutiae. Though it is almost impossible to say anything meaningful about the 55-second filmed news report to someone who knows little or nothing about the elaborate surrounding narrative, it is extremely difficult to get beyond the emotions elicited by the visual image to a critical examination of that narrative. Even "corrective" articles regularly commit factual errors about everything from the chronology of the *intifada* to the layout of Netzarim junction, ignore anomalies in the eyewitness accounts, or are oblivious to the absence of corroborating evidence. Finally, and fundamentally, every effort to reproduce the event dispassionately butts up against quite understandable resistance from those who cling to the packaged version.

But we do have extensive evidence of what was occurring at Netzarim junction on September 30, 2000. More than a dozen cameramen were at the junction filming the action that day. They were all

Palestinian, but they were working for Reuters, AP, NHK, France-2, and other prestigious networks. Aside from Abu Rahmeh's footage, brief excerpts from what they shot have appeared in news broadcasts. But hours of outtakes also exist, and their eloquence is astounding. I cannot claim they show everything that happened, but enough raw footage exists to substantiate what follows.

NETZARIM JUNCTION is a simple intersection where one road leads (or, following Israel's disengagement, will have led) to the Jewish settlement of Netzarim and another to the Palestinian village of El Bureij. A rudimentary Israeli outpost stands on the road to the settlement—a small fortress of blind slabs with a few tiny gunslits surmounted by a fragile lookout cage. Otherwise, Palestinian police and civilians circulated freely throughout the area on the day in question. They occupied a pair of three-story apartment buildings, known as "The Twins," that overlooked the outpost and that housed the families of Palestinian policemen assigned to joint patrols under the Oslo agreement. Palestinians also held another building, an abandoned factory, that towered over the Israeli position. In addition, they operated from a mound of sandy earth directly facing the al-Duras and known because of its shape as "the pita," and, down the road a bit toward El Bureij, from a cluster of what look like concrete bunkers.

On all the outtakes I saw, only one exchange of gunfire takes place: a brief outburst from the bunkers and a responding series of shots, ostensibly from the Israeli position. As for the death scene, it was filmed in front of a concrete-block wall abutting a makeshift building, opposite the pita but situated at an angle that made the al-Duras' barrel inaccessible to gunfire from the Israeli outpost.

In one version of his story, Talal Abu Rahmeh went to Netzarim junction at seven in the morning on a hunch that the children would be out demonstrating "because it was a school day," and he knew they demonstrated on school days. In another version, he ran over to the junction at 3 PM, after someone called his office to inform him that there were fierce battles going on. The outtakes show he was there from early morning. Apparently, a dozen of his colleagues had the same intuition; they too can be seen in the raw footage.

The Reuters, AP, and France-2 outtakes that I viewed show two totally different and easily identifiable types of activity at Netzarim junction: real, *intifada*-style attacks, and crudely falsified battle

scenes. Both the real and the fake scenes are played out against a background of normal civilian activity at a busy crossroads. In the “reality” zone, excited children and angry young men hurl rocks and Molotov cocktails at the Israeli outpost while *shababs* (“youths”) standing on the roof of the Twins throw burning tires down onto the caged lookout; this goes on seemingly for hours, without provoking the slightest military reaction from Israeli soldiers.

At the same time, in the “theatrical” zone, Palestinian stringers sporting prestigious logos on their vests and cameras are seen filming battle scenes staged behind the abandoned factory, well out of range of Israeli gunfire. The “wounded” sail through the air like modern dancers and then suddenly collapse. Cameramen jockey with hysterical youths who pounce on the “casualties,” pushing and shoving, howling *Allahu akhbar!*, clumsily grabbing the “injured,” pushing away the rare ambulance attendant in a pale green polyester jacket in order to shove, twist, haul, and dump the “victims” into UN and Red Crescent ambulances that pull up on a second’s notice and career back down the road again, sirens screaming. In one shot we recognize Talal Abu Rahmeh in his France-2 vest, filming a staged casualty scene.*

Split seconds of these ludicrous vignettes would later appear in newscasts and special reports; the husk, the raw footage that would reveal the fakery, had been removed, leaving the kernel rich in anti-Israel nutrients. Such staged scenes showed up, for example, in a dramatic CBS *60 Minutes* special report on Netzarim crossing—a place “now known,” intoned Bob Simon, echoing Palestinian sources, “as Martyr’s Junction.”

The al-Dura death scene was filmed right in the middle of these falsified incidents. It can be localized and situated. In one section of Reuters footage we see the man and the boy crouched behind the upended culvert as a jeep drives slowly up the road, stops in firing range of the Israeli position that is clearly visible in the near direction, makes a U-turn, drives in the opposite direction, stops short of the barrel/culvert, and helps perform the clearly faked evacuation of a man wounded in the right leg, as also shown in the France-2 news report. In fact, two ambulances stand for a long moment no more than fifteen feet from the al-Duras. There is no evidence of armed combat in their vicinity. No sound of gunfire. Men run down the road, passing in front of the al-Duras. No one is hit.

Nobody who was present at the junction that day

has ever corroborated Abu Rahmeh’s testimony, though he claims that several children huddled around him for protection as he filmed, and voices—of grown men—were recorded by the microphone attached to his camera. None of the other cameramen working at the junction that day filmed the al-Duras during their alleged ordeal under Israeli fire (though the pair can be discerned on one occasion, inadvertently captured in the background in an uneventful stretch of Reuters outtakes).

I also viewed a copy of the satellite feed transmitted by Abu Rahmeh late in the afternoon of September 30. In addition to the 55 seconds aired that evening, it includes a final image of the boy who would be described afterward as “killed instantly by a shot to the stomach”: in it he is seen shifting position, propping himself up on his elbow, shading his eyes with his hand, rolling over on his stomach, covering his eyes.

In addition, I saw outtakes from an interview in which Abu Rahmeh tells how he discovered the boy’s identity. Leaving the junction at around 4:30 PM, he bumped into a colleague and showed him the images he had just filmed. The other journalist, by chance a relative of Jamal al-Dura, supplied the names of the victims. Mourners in the massive funeral procession, allegedly held before sundown that very day, carried Muhammad al-Dura posters. Where and when were they printed?

IT IS no easy task to challenge the integrity of a powerful broadcaster in France, where the state-owned media operate with limited independence and no real competition. Charles Enderlin’s prestige and the dominant position of *France Télévisions* were enough to discredit the most diligent early analysts. To this day, Enderlin (a French Jew who became an Israeli citizen some 20 years ago and has served in the Israeli army) refuses to reply to questions about the accuracy of the news report and its enveloping narrative; responding with ad-hominem counterattacks, he threatens to sue his detractors for libel.

More than normal journalistic pride may be involved here. Enderlin’s news report was consistent with his stated overall view of the Middle East conflict. In his 2003 book, *Shattered Dreams*, he places the blame for Oslo’s failure squarely on Is-

* Students in a special course at the Israeli Military Academy, who had access to this raw footage, tagged and tracked the amateur actors as they went through their day, playing multiple roles. The injured and dead jump up, dust themselves off, play at offensive combat; casualties evacuated by ambulance are later seen loading a fellow actor into an ambulance or smiling with satisfaction as the ambulance door slams shut.

raeli prime minister Ehud Barak and U.S. President Bill Clinton, effectively absolving the Palestinians of responsibility. The same interpretation is, of course, shared by virtually the entire French intellectual and political elite, and endorsed by influential print media like *Le Monde*, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, and *Télérama*.

Still, in 2004, as the *intifada* slowed and its mythology faded, the al-Dura story, too, began to break down. Charles Enderlin and the French media gradually backed away from their initial assertion as to the origin of the fatal bullets, leaving the incident in a limbo where the Palestinians could continue to accuse Israel of murdering the boy in cold blood while the French let it be understood that he was killed in a crossfire. Then, at the end of October 2004, something happened that would have broken the logjam if the French media were truly free, which they are not.

Luc Rosenzweig, a retired *Le Monde* journalist who had doubted the veracity of the al-Dura news report from the first, completed an investigative article in which he formally accused France-2 of an "almost perfect media crime." His essay was scheduled to appear in the mainstream newsweekly *l'Express* on the fourth anniversary of the *intifada*. But the magazine's editorial director, Denis Jeambar, decided to delay publication in order to double-check Rosenzweig's facts.

Given his position, Jeambar was able to arrange a meeting with France-2's news director. He was accompanied there by Rosenzweig and Daniel Leconte, a prize-winning TV producer. Asking simple questions about Abu Rahmeh's satellite feed, the trio got shocking answers. They requested the 27 minutes of raw footage showing the al-Duras pinned down by Israeli gunfire; they were shown a half-hour of fake battle scenes similar to those described above. They asked why there were no pictures of Israeli soldiers aiming at the al-Duras; they were told that on this point the cameraman had retracted his testimony, given "under pressure" to the Palestinian Center for Human Rights. They asked to speak to the cameraman, then said to be undergoing medical treatment in Paris; they were told he did not speak French and that his English was too rudimentary (patently untrue). They asked to see the scene of the child's death throes, professedly edited out by Charles Enderlin because it was "too unbearable"; they were told that no such images existed. They in turn produced pictures of a dead child, identified as Muhammad al-Dura, who had been admitted to Gaza's Schifa hospital at noon or 1 PM on Sep-

tember 30, several hours before the alleged incident occurred; his face did not match that of the boy in the shooting scene, his wounds did not match the eyewitness descriptions. They were told that the channel's forensic specialists would look into the matter.

AT THIS point, Jeambar, perhaps thinking that the whole affair had become too hot to handle, reneged on his commitment to publish Rosenzweig's exposé. Seizing the initiative, Metula News Agency immediately leaked a report of the meeting and, at a press conference in Paris, reiterated its case for the al-Dura death scene as an outright falsification. Thereupon France-2, threatening legal action against anyone daring to question the integrity of its journalists, launched a spin operation: it sent Abu Rahmeh to Gaza to film Jamal al-Dura's scars and showed the resulting footage at a press conference from which all known skeptics were excluded. Articles appeared defending Charles Enderlin and denouncing Metula News Agency; most of them were incongruously illustrated with an image from the original news report clearly showing Jamal's bare arm—perfectly intact—a few short seconds before the round of gunfire that ended the scene.

But the bubble of tolerance protecting the French media had begun to stretch and tear. Three months after their October 2004 meeting with France-2, Denis Jeambar and Daniel Leconte came forward with their side of the story. The gist of their essay, published in *Le Figaro* after being rejected by *Le Monde*, confirmed the MENA release while chastising both Rosenzweig and MENA for jumping to the unwarranted conclusion that the death scene had been staged. Jeambar and Leconte also enjoined France-2 to make a full disclosure, withdraw its unjustified accusations, and recognize the incalculably damaging effects of its report in inciting violence and blackening Israel's name.

The very next day, Enderlin responded with an article in *Le Figaro* suggesting that his distinguished colleagues join him in a sort of gentleman's agreement to lay the affair to rest. His broadcast may have been hasty, he wrote, but it was justified on the grounds that the public had to know the truth, because so many children were being killed. He should have said, "were going to be killed," because Muhammad al-Dura, as his father proudly proclaimed, was the first *shahid*, and Enderlin's broadcast itself was instrumental in much of what followed. But, more than four years later, Enderlin

was still trying to defend his report as an accurate reflection of the situation on the ground.

Whatever his intentions, the result for Enderlin was disappointing. Indignantly defending their integrity, Jeambar and Leconte took him to task for having compromised his own. As Jeambar stiffly noted, journalists are supposed to report on what happens, not on what might have happened. Or, one could add, might not have happened.

So, is there now general agreement on the truth about the al-Dura affair?

Interviewed on a French-Jewish radio station in the thick of the controversy, Jeambar and Leconte described their sense of astonishment upon discovering the staged battle scenes. And yet, by the end of the interview, they were assuring themselves and their audience that the death of Muhammad al-Dura was *not* staged, that the father's injuries were authentic, that the Metula News Agency had exaggerated, and that the poor child must have been killed in a crossfire.

This notion of a death by crossfire is the *deus ex machina* of the al-Dura controversy. I have heard it a hundred times, and once used it myself. It is invoked in order to save reasonable people from even contemplating the possibility of a fabrication. But it is a figment of the imagination. The sole eyewitnesses—the cameraman and the surviving victim, Jamal al-Dura—have described 45 minutes of uninterrupted shooting from one direction only.

And what does the filmed news report show? The answer is staring us in the face, cinched by the collapse of France-2's four-year concealment of its lack of evidence. As even Charles Enderlin has tacitly admitted, the al-Dura report was not some brief excerpt from a longer stretch of filmed reality but a scene with no depth, no duration, no origin, and no continuation. The 45 minutes? Gone. Abu Rahmeh's 27 minutes? Gone, too. We are left with approximately a single minute of Jamal and Muhammad al-Dura filmed in continuous time.

In that minute, the two crouch behind an up-ended culvert and contort their faces in fear. Guttural screams are heard, but they do not come from the man or the boy; they come from men standing within range of the France-2 cameraman's microphone. Jamal bobs his head. Muhammad stretches out at his father's feet. Then, in the brief portion that was carefully edited out but that can be seen in the outtakes, the boy changes position several times, using voluntary muscles that only living people can activate.

During the 55-second sequence we see two bullets hitting the wall, which is already pockmarked with a number of other bullet holes nowhere near father and child. A cloud of dust obscures the last few frames. There is no sign or sound of a crossfire. There are no death throes.

The rest, as we say in French, is literature. There can be no further attempts to reconstruct the incident by adding to those 55 seconds since, as France-2 has now revealed, there *is* no additional footage.

But now look again at the Reuters outtakes. A jeep drives up a road, turns, goes down the other side, takes part in a battle scene. An ambulance pulls up, a "wounded" man is dragged across the road, placed on a stretcher, loaded into the ambulance, the ambulance drives away. Men run from position A to position B. Children toss Molotov cocktails at the IDF fortress. There is much laughter and cheering from the "audience," clusters of cheerful young men watching the show. All this time, traffic trundles through the intersection, schoolchildren go by with their bookbags, a fashionably dressed woman talks on her cellphone and chats and jokes with cameramen who stand nonchalantly with their backs to the Israeli position. Things are moving, the energy level is high, the *shababs* are fearless. Palestinian policemen mingle in the crowd, occasionally shoot a few rounds into the air, join in the battle scenes, get "wounded" and come back for more. Children set fire to tires; you can almost smell the rubber burning. The France-2 cameraman, Abu Rahmeh, is there, too, clearly visible, in the heat of the action, filming ambulance evacuations of fake casualties in large patches of real time. Familiar, retrievable, believable.

Where then did the story, the enveloping narrative, come from? Where did all those prestigious journalists get the background information they developed with such evident sincerity in their reports? There is only one source: Talal Abu Rahmeh. The story told by Jamal, bandaged in a hospital room, dovetailed with Abu Rahmeh's story. Enderlin religiously confirmed it. Everyone else repeats it.

Charles Enderlin constantly reaffirms his confidence in the professional competence and honesty of Abu Rahmeh—they have been working together for years—and systematically reiterates the dramatic facts of the al-Dura incident just as he heard them from his trusted cameraman. Where else could the story have come from? Though Enderlin narrated the incident as if he were on the spot, he has made no secret of the fact that he was in Ra-

mallah on September 30, covering Marwan Barghout's press conference. His account of the dramatic phone calls he received from Abu Rahmeh is part of the fleshed-out narrative. According to Enderlin, the cameraman phoned to say that he was caught in a shooting zone and that his life was in danger. He asked the France-2 correspondent to look after his family if the worst should befall him. The two men called each other several more times, the photographer describing the scene of the man and the boy trapped, the father repeatedly wounded, his hand, his shoulder, his elbow, his hip. The child's horrible death. Somewhere around 5:30 PM, the cameraman transmitted the satellite feed that would be edited into the famous news report narrated by Charles Enderlin.

How long did it take Enderlin, a seasoned journalist, to realize that his cameraman was lying, and that there were no additional images, no 45 minutes and no 27 minutes, to confirm the scene Abu Rahmeh said he had filmed? How long did it take France-2 officials to realize they had made a mistake in trusting the word of Enderlin? As long as the burden of proof rested on France-2's challengers, it was relatively easy to quibble over details. Now that the event has been reduced to its 55 inconclusive seconds, one must ask a different question. What was the role of the government-owned French television network, which is to say the French government itself, in devising, implementing, and spreading this atrocious calumny, whose repercussions are with us to this day?

Bush and the Realists

Gary Rosen

FOREIGN-POLICY “realism” has never been an easy sell in America. Its emergence as a mature school of thought in the early years of the cold war is generally credited to Hans J. Morgenthau, a German-Jewish refugee whose self-assigned task was to cure his adopted country of its inveterate and, to his mind, reckless idealism. As Morgenthau argued in his classic *Politics Among Nations* (1948), the U.S. could no longer afford to indulge the “crusading” mentality of Woodrow Wilson, especially when confronted by the no less dangerously universalistic claims of Soviet Communism. In dealing with the USSR, American resistance had to be tempered by compromise and engagement, by a concern for stability and order. Both superpowers had legitimate interests, the mutual recognition of which, Morgenthau insisted, was the only hope for survival in the nuclear age.

Realist prudence prevailed often enough during the long decades of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry, but, to Morgenthau’s dismay, it proved impossible to exorcise the ideological dimension of the conflict from American politics and discourse. In a nation persuaded of the world-historical significance of its own democratic principles, statesmen might practice realpolitik but would hesitate to avow it. Realism’s directives were what gifted advisers like Dean

Acheson, George Kennan, and Henry Kissinger whispered to Presidents behind closed doors (or urged in their own writings), not the stuff of stump speeches and party platforms.

This is not to say that realism has lacked American constituencies. In the academic field of international relations, self-proclaimed “neorealists” have flourished for decades, tracing their intellectual roots to Morgenthau and, more distantly, to the bleak, unforgiving analyses of Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes. Being modern political scientists, they have tried to put their work on a properly scientific footing; “rigor” and “parsimony” are their tests of excellence. Where others see great variety in the motives of states, academic realists dwell on the unrelenting demands of power and survival. Scholars who share this approach have produced an enormous and (as any graduate student in the field can attest) ever-growing constellation of competing hypotheses, models, and case studies.

In the political sphere, realism was once a prominent element in the foreign-policy establishments of both parties, undergirding the cold-war doctrine of containment. Since the Vietnam war, however, it has had a decidedly mixed career. Realist thought has largely faded from view among Democrats, who for decades have tended either to shrink from the assertion of American power or to insist on its strict validation by international norms and institutions—positions difficult to reconcile

GARY ROSEN is the managing editor of *COMMENTARY* and the editor of *The Right War? The Conservative Debate on Iraq*, which has just been published by Cambridge University Press.

with the unsentimental pursuit of the national interest. Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was Jimmy Carter's national security adviser, is often mentioned as an exception to this rule, but he was controversial for his hawkishness even at the height of his influence, and remains a marginal figure among Democratic policy-makers.

Which leaves the Republican party, the contentious if usually accommodating home of realpolitik since the 1960's. Though neoconservatives and other cold warriors never trusted Kissinger and his heirs, they tended to grant them at least a grudging respect. The realists who served in the Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and first Bush administrations (to say nothing of Nixon and Bush, Sr. themselves) may have been "soft" on Communism, as their detractors on the Right often charged, but they shared certain fundamentals with the more ideological factions of the conservative camp. They recognized the nature of the Soviet threat, took seriously the balance of power, and knew that treaties and diplomacy, however useful, were no substitute for American military might and credibility.

RUNNING FOR President in 2000, George W. Bush gave every indication that he would extend this Republican tradition. Though he struggled at times with the finer points of international relations, famously flubbing a reporter's pop quiz, he was clear about his strategic priorities. A Bush administration would focus on major issues like trade and military readiness and on improving relations with major powers like China and Russia. Writing in *Foreign Affairs* in the lead-up to the election, then-campaign adviser Condoleezza Rice argued for "a disciplined and consistent foreign policy," one that, in contrast to the Clinton record, would separate "the important from the trivial." Her article was titled "Promoting the National Interest," a phrase that in itself spoke volumes.

But then came 9/11, and very soon thereafter the candidate who had mocked "nation-building" and recommended an international posture of "humble" strength emerged as a President of unapologetically neoconservative convictions. A similar conversion seems to have been experienced by Rice, his alter ego on foreign affairs. In the years since 9/11, this transformation has been noted—and lamented—in many quarters. But the shock of it has fallen hardest perhaps on realists, both inside and outside the Republican party, whose expectations have been rudely disappointed.

Indeed, the President has gone out of his way to

signal that his own most controversial policies, particularly the decision to overthrow and replace the regime of Saddam Hussein, have sprung in part from a conscious repudiation of Morgenthau's legacy. As he declared in June 2004 to the graduating class of the U.S. Air Force Academy,

Some who call themselves "realists" question whether the spread of democracy in the Middle East should be any concern of ours. But the realists in this case have lost contact with a fundamental reality. America has always been less secure when freedom is in retreat. America is always more secure when freedom is on the march.

It is no surprise, then, that realists of various stripes have been among the administration's most determined critics. Brent Scowcroft, national security adviser to Ford and Bush père (and Rice's one-time mentor), registered his discontent early on, arguing that Iraq would be a costly diversion from the war on terrorism. In the pages of the quarterly *National Interest*, the Nixon protégés Robert F. Ellsworth and Dimitri K. Simes have objected strenuously to Bush's unilateralism and aggressive promotion of democracy. So has Owen Harries, the journal's distinguished former editor. On Capitol Hill, Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska, a self-styled realist and likely contender for the GOP presidential nomination in 2008, has voiced increasing skepticism about the war. Even usually quiescent realist scholars, including many of the biggest names in the field, have gotten into the act, speaking out against the invasion of Iraq and, in its wake, helping to form an anti-Bush advocacy group called the Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy.

TO TOP off this shift into opposition, the realist camp now has two new manifestos. Though both written by senior members of the guild, they are strikingly different books. Stephen M. Walt of Harvard, a leading international-relations theorist and a charter member of the Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy, has composed a blistering critique in the form of an academic treatise. Richard N. Haass, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations and a veteran of several Republican administrations (including the current one), has dispatched a polite but firm diplomatic protest, a plea for a new course. Walt is the naysayer, Haass the consensus-builder. One might think of them as the bad cop and the good cop of realist dissent.

Walt's point of departure is neatly summed up by his title, *Taming American Power: The Global Re-*

sponse to U.S. Primacy.* Since the end of the cold war, he writes, Americans have vigorously debated how best to use their country's unsurpassed military, economic, and cultural might. But we have failed to consider how this behemoth looks to other nations. "In a world of independent states," Walt observes, "the strongest is always a potential threat to the rest, if only because they cannot be entirely sure what it is going to do with the power at its command." A state enjoying such primacy is especially threatening when filled with righteous indignation, as the U.S. has been since 9/11, and when led by a President like George W. Bush, whose indifference to international opinion is matched only by his "smug overconfidence" in America's ability to go it alone.

Yet, even in their relative weakness, other states are not without recourse against American primacy. Although "balancing" in the classic realist sense—that is, by means of a grand countervailing alliance—has not occurred, "softer" forms of balancing are not difficult to find. We have seen in recent years not just deepening strategic ties among China, Russia, and Europe, but also more cooperation among "so-called rogue states" like Iran and North Korea. As for a "nonstate group" like al Qaeda, its preferred balancing option has been the "asymmetric strategy" of terrorism, which seeks to alter U.S. behavior "by persuading it that its current policies are too expensive to sustain."

Weaker states, especially allies, also have been able to accomplish their own ends through various tactics of accommodation. One of these is what Walt calls "bonding," typified by Tony Blair's deft exploitation of the "special relationship" between Great Britain and the U.S. Though derided by critics as Bush's "poodle," the British prime minister has been able to use his influence to win a prominence for himself and his country that otherwise would not have been available. Still more impressive as a tool to sway American power is domestic political "penetration." Here Walt's chief example—in fact, the book's most extended case study—is the "Israel lobby." In a democracy, he emphasizes, such pressure is perfectly legitimate, but there is no denying its distorting influence. Since "the *objective* [his emphasis] case for a close U.S.-Israel partnership is weaker today than it was in the past," the explanation for the tight bond can lie only in "Israel's unmatched ability to manipulate the American political system."

Resistance to U.S. primacy is inevitable, Walt believes, but its present-day intensity is not. By openly defying the interests and expectations of

other nations, the Bush administration has made American power seem threatening in an unprecedented way. What sort of grand strategy, then, would better suit America's extraordinary position of dominance?

Walt's own blueprint entails a fundamental shift in America's global posture, one that would "reassure" friends and foes alike of our benign intentions. He labels it "offshore balancing," and its essence is simple: the U.S. would dramatically reduce the overall "footprint" of its military power, especially in Europe and the Middle East, and directly intervene only in instances of "overt aggression" against our "vital interests," leaving the maintenance of stability in key regions to "local actors." More important perhaps, the U.S. would stop "telling the world what to do and how to live" and stop "trying to impose democracy at the point of a gun," as we have so disastrously attempted to do in Iraq. If Americans lack the "wisdom and self-restraint" to pursue such a course, he warns, we may well awake one day soon to discover new international arrangements "whose main purpose," in a sad replay of our own cold-war strategy, "is to contain us."

WALT PLAINLY intends *Taming American Power* as a provocation. He takes sharply contrarian positions on a range of difficult issues, from nuclear proliferation to the Arab-Israeli conflict, emphasizing in each instance just how wrong a turn he thinks the U.S. has taken under its benighted current leadership. Equal parts professor and polemicist, he is eager to demonstrate realism's analytical virtues—its austerity, its clinical detachment, its focus on the fundamentals of interest and power.

What is refreshing about Walt's brand of Bush-bashing is that, unlike many liberal critics, he is no earnest internationalist, looking expectantly toward the day when the world's swords will be beaten into plowshares. He is unembarrassed by American primacy, and has no moral compunctions about the pursuit of American interests. His objection is not that U.S. policy under the Bush administration has been selfish but that it has been dangerously counterproductive, the source of a mounting international backlash.

It is a peculiar realist calculus, however, with which Walt tries to support this hyperbolic claim. As evidence of rising opposition to the United States, he begins by offering up the polling numbers that have become common exhibits in the for-

* W.W. Norton, 320 pp., \$27.95.

eign-policy debate: the U.S., he reminds us, has come to be seen in an increasingly unfavorable light by much of the rest of the world. Such news is troubling, to be sure, but it is difficult to see why it would figure in the reckonings of a hard-edged realist, particularly one who, like Walt, is so frankly distrustful of popular judgment in foreign affairs. Is not the crux of the issue how states *behave*?

Yet on this point he fails to produce the goods. By Walt's own admission, U.S. power under Bush has not generated the countervailing alliance—the “hard” balancing—that realist theory would predict. Other nations have resisted specific American policies and imposed real costs on U.S. action, but, as Walt concedes, they have not contemplated the sort of “encircling coalitions that Wilhelmine Germany or the Soviet Union provoked.”

To explain this “anomalous” situation, Walt recites a catalog of factors, only to note in passing that the U.S. is not seen as “an especially aggressive country,” having never sought “to conquer and dominate large sections of the globe.” Putting the point more explicitly, one might say instead that, in contrast to most other ascendant powers in the history of the world, the U.S. has not aspired to empire, and has lacked such ambitions largely because it is a liberal democracy whose own identity springs from a declared commitment to the right of self-government and to the independence of nations.

ORTHODOX “NEOREALISM” frowns on such “unit-level analysis” (as it is known in the jargon of the field); the character of a particular state is not supposed to matter as compared with the quantum of raw power at its disposal. But America's well-known aversion to dominion is the key to understanding how other nations gauge its intentions. As it happens, most countries, even those deeply unhappy with the Bush administration's policies, do not appear to share Walt's view that neoconservative Washington hopes “to govern vast areas of the world by force.”

No grand alliance has formed against the U.S., one might also add, because the world increasingly shares the Bush administration's urgency in fighting Islamist terrorism. Although Walt dismisses the American effort as a “crusade,” it is one in which many countries now have a serious and growing stake. Trans-Atlantic cooperation on this front is already substantial and, in the wake of the London bombings, will surely intensify (to say nothing of such recent wonders as France's active collaboration with the U.S. in confronting Syria). As for the

Islamic world itself, the red-hot center of anti-American sentiment, barbarous assaults in Sharm el-Sheikh, Baghdad, Jakarta, Istanbul, and elsewhere have finally prompted second thoughts about the piety of the jihadists. In the *fatwas* of clerics and in Islamic public opinion, suicide attacks are starting to win condemnation. Even the UN is preparing, at long last, to call terrorism by its proper name. More of the world, in short, seems to be coming around to the view that the indiscriminate slaughter of civilians, far from being (as Walt would have it) a “strategy” for reversing hated policies, poses a nihilistic threat to any kind of civilized order.

It is also worth recalling that Americans themselves were familiar with Islamist terrorism well before 9/11. Indeed, for years they have watched the citizens of Israel, an ally and fellow democracy, endure the vicious onslaught of Muslim “martyrs.” Without claiming to possess Walt's “objective” understanding of these matters, one might venture that this sense of shared trauma and threat has been a chief source of continued American-Israeli solidarity, even more significant than the influence of the Jewish advocacy groups and public officials in whom Walt takes an obsessive, almost unseemly, interest. In a similar vein, the best explanation for Tony Blair's enthusiastic support of President Bush may lie not in the quid pro quos of “bonding”—after all, he has often returned home from Washington empty-handed—but in his endlessly and eloquently stated loathing for Baathist and Islamist totalitarianism. Such motives find no place in Walt's reductive paradigms.

As for “offshore balancing”—Walt's proposed solution to the international woes of the United States—it is a strategy of retreat, and would surely be interpreted as such by our enemies. Its toll on American credibility, even with our vast military and economic resources, would be incalculably high. As a response to anti-Americanism in the Middle East, it would likely backfire, drawing justifiable charges of hypocrisy and neglect. The people of the region may have mixed feelings about democracy-promotion by the U.S., but they certainly have had enough of the sheiks and strongmen on whom Walt, following the lead of too many American administrations, would rely for stability.

Are Stephen Walt's views “isolationist”? He bristles at the suggestion, and with some justice. But that is their unmistakable valence in today's foreign-policy debate. For confirmation, one need look no further than the signed declarations of the Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy, where “re-

alism" takes the form of denouncing America's incipient "empire" and where Walt and his academic fellow-travelers have found, among the nativist minions of Patrick J. Buchanan and the libertarian ideologues of the Cato Institute, their natural allies.

RICHARD HAASS, it is safe to say, is no petitioner or rhetorical bomb-thrower. The director of policy planning at the State Department under Colin Powell before leaving in 2003 to lead the Council on Foreign Relations, he is known to have clashed with the administration's neoconservatives over Iraq and other big strategic questions. Like Brent Scowcroft, his boss at the National Security Council in the first Bush administration, Haass is the voice of the sober, moderate realist establishment. Though now very much on the outside looking in, he is someone who, in a future Republican administration, could easily wind up with a prominent job.

His book, *The Opportunity: America's Moment to Alter History's Course*,* possesses none of the bite and theoretical pretension of Walt's, but it takes aim at many of the same targets. Haass, too, laments the Bush administration's unilateralism, fearing that it will stimulate a return to harsh balance-of-power politics. He has no taste for assertive democracy-promotion, arguing that the U.S. must concentrate instead on the external actions of other states. And he considers the war in Iraq both "unwarranted"—Saddam Hussein, he suggests, could have been contained by enhanced sanctions—and far too dear in terms of American resources and attention.

But rehearsing familiar criticisms is not Haass's aim; he has an agenda of his own. Whatever his differences with recent U.S. policy—and despite the frightening new threats at large in the world—he believes that we live at a uniquely fortunate moment in global affairs, a moment (as his title proclaims) of profound "opportunity." The end of the cold war has left behind the past century's great ideological divide. More countries than ever before are democratic and market-oriented. Most important of all,

For the first time in modern history, the major powers of the day—currently, the United States, Europe, China, Russia, Japan, possibly India—are not engaged in a classic struggle for domination at each other's expense. There are few contests over territory. For the foreseeable future, war between or among them borders on the highly unlikely and, in some instances, the unthinkable.

The task for the United States, according to Haass, is to turn this still-nascent harmony into something more permanent, into "rules, policies, and institutions" that will allow the world to manage the formidable goods and evils of globalization. To achieve such "integration," Americans will have to think more broadly, moving beyond their fixation on fighting terrorism, and they will have to check their impulse to act alone. Only "effective multilateralism," in which the U.S. accepts limits on its own actions and seeks consensus on the urgent issues of the day, can ensure the continued advance of peace and prosperity. Now as always in modern history, Haass writes, the balance between the "forces of order and disorder" will be "largely determined by the degree to which the major powers . . . can agree on rules of the road—and impose them on those who reject them."

Although Haass cites the post-Napoleonic "concert of Europe" as a precedent for such cooperation, what he has in mind is more far-reaching, and in many respects defies conventional realist thinking. It is up to the U.S., he argues, to persuade the world to accept a range of positive commitments that impinge on traditional notions of sovereignty. Where genocide threatens, the international community should accept "a right and a duty to act to protect innocent life." States that promote or even passively abet terrorism should be understood to be committing "an act of war." Regimes that engage in nuclear proliferation should face the strongest of sanctions, "not to exclude attack and removal from power."

In the economic realm, Haass would press nations rich and poor to trade ever more freely, subject to the liberalizing superintendence of the World Trade Organization (WTO). At the same time, the U.S. must attend to the abiding backwardness of whole regions of the world: "We need to absorb the idea that the failure of other countries to provide political and economic opportunity to their citizens is not just a humanitarian or moral problem but a strategic one as well, as such societies all too often spawn radicals and terrorists." The "safest and best way" to deal with the worst of these international offenders, Haass believes, is to co-opt them with social and cultural advantages and with rising living standards: not regime change but regime "evolution" should be our watchword.

If the U.S. is to accomplish even part of this agenda, Haass concludes, we must reacquaint ourselves with the etiquette of international leader-

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ship. Consultations with the other major powers need to be “frequent and genuine,” particularly on issues of war and peace, and the American point of view cannot always prevail. We must play for the long run, not for transient victories. “Diplomacy need not be a dirty word.”

HAASS IS hardly alone in wishing to change the tone set by American foreign policy in recent years. Indeed, the Bush administration itself appears to have come some way toward his view. For all the attention focused on the nomination of the “undiplomatic” John Bolton—arguably, a perfect fit for the peculiar perversities of the UN—the administration has been impressively involved of late on the diplomatic front, not least in the frenetic globe-trotting of Condoleezza Rice, who since becoming Secretary of State has spent much of her time consulting, cajoling, and confronting world leaders.

In any case, Haass goes too far in what he expects the U.S. to cede in such powwows, describing if not a veto for other nations then certainly a substantial check, one that few American Presidents are likely to accept any time soon. Foreign policy is not an overseas popularity contest, and even our most sincere diplomatic overtures are unlikely to reverse the tide of anti-Americanism, which is a force in the world with a life very much of its own. That does not mean we should be unconcerned about the perceived “legitimacy” of U.S. policy; as Haass rightly argues, the judgment of the rest of the world may not necessarily be sound, but the support of other countries can help us to shape the international climate to our own goals.

Unfortunately, Haass’s own version of those goals is at once overly ambitious and woefully shortsighted. There is, in the first place, a gross mismatch between the worthy ends that he proposes and the modest means available to achieve them. Reaching into his diplomatic pouch, he pulls out the familiar tools of realist statecraft: “carrots and sticks,” interests and incentives, rules and institutions. Nowhere, however, does he suggest what, precisely, would induce the other major powers to accept the changes he envisions.

China and Russia, in particular, may be willing to give up some measure of their sovereignty in order to achieve the fullest benefits of trade under the WTO, but on the issues of security emphasized by Haass—genocide, terrorism, nuclear proliferation—it is hard to imagine circumstances in which they would endorse “rules of the road” encouraging muscular action against offenders. For China

and Russia alike, after all, sovereignty is what protects and bolsters their authoritarian regimes.

There is no obvious or easy solution to this problem, but Haass is reluctant to confront it at all. For him, the only option for the U.S. is to wait for “integration,” especially of the economic sort, to work its magic on the Chinese dragon and the Russian bear, unleashing in due course the forces of political liberalization. In the meantime, we may issue, *sotto voce*, an occasional human-rights protest but must not consider real penalties in the form of privileges lost or sanctions imposed. Provoked though we may be, the U.S. must forgo any “temptation to actively work against a fellow major power,” and taking a stand on democracy and human rights “is rarely something that can be allowed to crowd out other objectives.”

The fact that this is standard-issue realism cannot hide its ugliness. While it is true that the U.S. needs the cooperation of Beijing and Moscow, the converse is also true, and can be made contingent to some degree on political progress (or at least on an absence of political regression). Pressing such issues is important not only for the sake of the reformers and dissidents to whose side the U.S. should rally. In the case of China in particular, it is incumbent upon us to recognize the looming tension there between dynamic economic and social change, on the one hand, and political stasis and oppression, on the other. To assume that China’s present course will ensure stability is to share the complacency of its Communist rulers.

Still more disappointing is Haass’s impulse to hedge his high-minded principles of integration even in areas that do not require confronting a “fellow” major power. Among his stated priorities is “taking on” Islamist terrorism, and he finds little merit in the argument, voiced by Walt among others, that such violence is an answer to particular American or Western transgressions. The aims of “existential” terrorists are so far-reaching, Haass writes, “that they could never be satisfied through policy give-and-take or compromise”; in this category he makes a point of including not just the adherents of al Qaeda but also “those Palestinian terrorists who reject a Jewish state.”

And yet, in almost the next breath, Haass declares the need for high-level American pressure to bring about, as soon as possible, a Palestinian state, in order to improve “perceptions of the United States” and our “diplomatic prospects” in the Arab world. Whether this state would stand any real chance of eluding the grip of the Islamists does not appear to interest him; it is enough that the Pales-

tinian Authority's new leadership has "disavowed" terrorism.

For establishing a Palestinian state, Haass's time frame is tomorrow or sooner; for advancing democratic reform, it is eventually, if then. This patience is doubly regrettable with respect to the Arab world, where Haass plainly recognizes the nature of the threat we face and its origins in the region's isolation and ferocious resistance to modernity. But he would deal with the problem in the mild, temporizing way that passes for assertiveness among realists:

[Our] public statements and private advice can create support for change and help launch debates. Economic resources can empower civil society. Exchanges that bring students and young professionals to the United States can introduce new ideas and provide valuable experience. Teacher and language training, translation of texts, the adoption of modern curricula—all can improve the quality of education. Radio, television, and the Internet can be used to . . .

And so forth, and so on. What is notable about this list is that, in one form or another, such initiatives have been under way for some time, certainly since well before the attacks of 9/11. Why, one might wonder, is it only now, as Haass himself notes, that we seem to be making progress in promoting reform among the Arabs?

The answer, of course, is the U.S. campaign in Iraq. Even by the testimony of some of the Middle East's anti-American stalwarts, the emergence in Iraq of an embattled experiment in constitutional self-government has had an electrifying effect on the prospects for democratic change in the region. Popular expectations have shifted, and so too have political realities, from Lebanon and Syria to Saudi Arabia and Egypt. In the careful ledger sheet that

Haass uses to assess the war in Iraq, he records many debits, pointing to the undeniable costs of the American invasion. But he fails to record any credits (except for the fall of Saddam himself), and certainly none for the Middle East's recent and unprecedented turn toward liberalization.

"GOOD MOTIVES give assurance against deliberately bad policies," Hans J. Morgenthau cautioned, in an axiom cited by Haass, but "they do not guarantee the moral goodness and political success of the policies they inspire." One might go further and say, as Morgenthau himself did, that good motives can blind us to the requirements of successful policy, as they have sometimes done in Iraq. But Morgenthau's prudential advice also has its limits.

It is true that good motives—by which he meant moral aims—"guarantee" nothing. But the same can be said of every motive, even the clear-eyed pursuit of a starkly defined national interest. Indeed, if events of the past several years demonstrate anything, it is the naïveté of confining American foreign policy to narrow questions of interest and to the maintenance of amicable relations among the major powers. Mere cooperation among states is no promise of peace and security when what goes on *within* states, large and small, has assumed such potentially lethal proportions. In this respect, as President Bush correctly observed in his June 2004 speech at the Air Force Academy, realism has proved a most unrealistic guide to foreign policy.

None of this makes it easier—or, in every instance, practical—to put freedom "on the march," in Bush's phrase. But our predicament leaves few other options, and we will never discover the right combination of "carrots and sticks" for the job if, for fear of offending our friends, we resign ourselves to a status quo that nurtures our enemies.

In Bellow's Company

Herbert Gold

POSTWAR PARIS—ration cards, public baths if a person developed an interest in cleanliness, and a romantic view of ambition as the most reliable means of winter heating—took up once more its honored role as a haven for young American writers. Bruised and lovely, Europe's paradise of misery was still, in the late 1940's, the capital of hope.

Along with Richard Wright, the most esteemed American writer in residence during my years there (1949-1951) was Saul Bellow, approximately ten years the senior of the likes of James Baldwin, Evan Connell, Terry Southern, Otto Friedrich, George Plimpton, Max Steele, and my own callow self. Bellow had published two novels, *Dangling Man* (1944) and *The Victim* (1947), appeared regularly in *Partisan Review*, collected a Guggenheim fellowship. The rumor got around that he was destined to be America's next great novelist. His confident and graceful lounging, on view especially at the Café Le Rouquet near Saint-Germain-des-Près, seemed to confirm the rumor. He had a contract with Viking. He was writing, and sometimes reading aloud, what would become *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953). He was legal; the rest of us were stowaways.

HERBERT GOLD is the author of, among other novels, *Fathers*, *The Great American Jackpot*, *The Man Who Was Not With It*, *Daughter Mine*, and the forthcoming *My First Murder*. His non-fiction books include *Bohemia and Haiti: Best Nightmare on Earth*.

We aspirants on our GI-Bill money or Fulbright checks, or selling our clothes, cigarettes, and dollars on the black market, saw him as an Old Master in his early thirties. He had climbed the heights while some of us were still peddling hashish to gullible Frenchmen under the chic American name "marijuana," or serving as gigolos to existentialist millionaires, or, worst of all, cadging handouts from family grinds back home. A few English-language magazines—*Points*, *Janus*, *Zero*, and *Death* (the answer to Time Inc.'s *Life*)—had been started by young men and women of dependent means. Orson Welles gave the editor of *Death* a few bucks for food, which he shared with me in return for translating French restaurant menus; otherwise, he was reduced to ordering "Jumbo omelet, goddammit! Omelet jumbo!," which, mysteriously to him, always came with ham.

I watched Saul from across a terrace, at his ease, and tried to fit this boyish person to his book *The Victim*, about a New York summer hot as Bangkok and the mutual sufferings of a crazed anti-Semite and his prey, which I had read during my first summer back in college after the army and the war. The dark-eyed young man with a shock of black hair and a large-lipped smile was what a writer should look like. Also he wrote, I thought, as a writer should write, with acute senses and astringent alertness to events. Naturally, I didn't dare approach this formidable personage strolling under the plane trees or holding court in the cafés of the quarter.

I don't remember exactly how we met; perhaps he was amused by my lurking, shy shadow. Without telling him, I sent the manuscript of my first novel, *Birth of a Hero*, to Viking and it was dug out of the slush pile by a young editor, Monroe Engel, who shepherded it to higher authorities, including the critic Malcolm Cowley, then an adviser to Viking. Since my return address was Paris, some prudent soul thought to ask Saul for an opinion—had I really written the book? Would I be likely to repay investment by writing another book?—and he gave a favorable verdict. Thanks partly to his generosity, I became a published novelist.

In Paris, with the news of imminent publication, I was adopted by some of the older expatriates in addition to the French students, artists, and layabouts who had already become my Left Bank friends. Rodin's Balzac strutted belly-forward on his pedestal at Vavin-Montparnasse; encouraged by Sartre and de Beauvoir, huddling nearby at the Café de Flore and the Deux Magots, Diderot on his own pedestal pointed an accusing finger across the boulevard at the ancient church of St.-Germain-des-Près. Bellow was not one of these stony challengers; rather, an amiable deity for the fresh crop of Americans seeking out the Paris of Henry Miller.

Saul's generosity was not the sum of his appeal. His complaints, particularly marital, and his neediness, which went back to childhood or perhaps to the origins of the human species, gave him the charm of a genius for grief. His lamentations, what I thought of as "The Book of Saul," a long-running drama, had some of the eloquence of Job and Jeremiah: sackcloth, ashes, a wife who didn't understand him, and sometimes, even worse, a woman who did. In that last variation, "The Book of Saul" departed Scripture in the direction of modern happy endings.

When his marriage boiled over, the spillage was uncontained by the boundaries of family. The shock of seeing this hero in a state of frantic self-pity bewildered my twenty-two-year-old wife and my twenty-four-year-old self. He was a mature person, about the age of Jesus when crucified, but we were kids. With his first two books, his handsome lounging, and his renown as the Designated New Voice, his fall into despair made us feel awe. It was as if the mountain crumbled as we watched; we heard the shrieks.

Usually these family quarrels, hot tongue and cold shoulder, had to do with boredom (his) and jealousy (his wife Anita's). He cultivated the admiration of pretty young women; he received it. He liked to recall how, when his first story was pub-

lished in a national magazine, *Harper's Bazaar*, along with a photo of the author, he had received a telephone call from MGM Pictures. Did they want to make a movie of his story, we asked? He beamed; high wattage. There was an ironic glint in the large dark eyes. His smile delighted. No, they wanted to offer him a screen test.

When he glanced around the circle of admirers on the terrace of Le Rouquet at the corner of Rue des Saints-Pères and the Boulevard Saint-Germain, we all responded with an echo of his own joyous amusement, just as if we were receiving the tale for the first time. Sometimes there was at least one person present for whom it was new.

AT THE end of a sleety Paris winter, my wife Edith and I thought of hitchhiking south for a while to pick figs and swim in the Mediterranean. Saul had another dreadful long-run battle in progress with Anita and needed to get away. He decided upon a strategic retreat to Spain by automobile, and invited us to come along. We hoped to find cheap digs in one of the French towns near the Spanish border. This is how young we were: we felt we were making a necessary political gesture by stopping short of visiting Franco Spain.

The trip in Saul's Citroën was no joyride. He wailed and wept as he drove. He was also funny and full of curiosity about himself, and he knew the map. I still connect his total recall for directions, his sensitive nose, with the quality of his gift, an almost metabolic perspicacity. Through the narrow medieval streets of Avignon he found our way, sniffing out the correct road. Ah, here would be a bread smell. And there it was—a good bakery. There was also an unnerving claim for attention to his marital agonies. His need was exclusive, unflagging, draining. He required an audience as devoted as the audience he gave himself.

Occasionally he rested from discourse about his conjugal griefs by talking about his book in progress, reading aloud during stops from *The Adventures of Augie March*. Although my approval was a foregone conclusion, he asked for fresh and renewed bursts of enthusiasm. Occasionally, for a little variety, I tried to speak of my own novel-in-progress. But this really wasn't the program.

By the time we reached Banyuls, a few miles from the Spanish border, Edith and I were exhausted by the pleasure of Saul's company. Enough; we were stopping. The long afternoon on those narrow roads of the Côte Vermeil, hearing of how only oblivion could offer Saul release from his sorrow, along with how his book would change the

face of American literature, had left us hyperventilating. It was hot, bugs were swarming, and there may have been a *mistral*, that wind which makes folks crazier than usual.

We worried about leaving him alone in the hotel. We sat under an umbrella, drinking lukewarm soda, waving away the flies. We dreaded the meal we were about to have with him before he drove on into Spain. How would we cope with his paroxysms of despair?

Edith nudged my arm. "Look."

He was bouncing toward us with a boyish grin, hair slicked down after his shower, eyes bright and skin fresh, chipper and restored. We were drained by the sufferings he seemed to have shed. He was ready for a glass of wine and a good meal of the local fish stew, and his nose was twitching as he approved of the girls on their high wooden clogs in the town square of Banyuls-sur-Mer.

A FEW MONTHS later, I handed Saul a story, "The Heart of the Artichoke." He was traveling to Italy and said he would take it with him. In a week or so I received the letter every young writer wishes to receive from the maestro (it even came from Rome, like an encyclical). In his clear and comely handwriting it gave me the clear and comely news I wanted. One odd phrase stood out like a monument at the end of paragraphs of perfect enthusiasm: "All barriers are down."

Through the inevitable discouragements to come, I remembered this grace note from on high and would mumble to myself, All barriers are down . . . all barriers are down . . . surely all barriers must come down. This zestful generosity of which the young Bellow was capable still fills me with gratitude, despite the narrower judgments of later years. It fits a time when birds sang sweetly in the courtyards of Paris and all our sleeves were stuffed with manuscripts.

In the early 50's, Saul's urban wit and angst—Kafka out of Chicago, Dostoevsky from the yeshiva, polymathical, polylinguistical, playful about it all—offered just the ticket for a GI-Bill generation that was heading from college into graduate work, although our parents had often not finished high school. He made fun of suffering, he made the suffering into fun, he was fully implicated in his own life.

His personal grace relieved the solipsism. It wasn't that he didn't need others; he wooed those around him with an eloquent performance. He enacted his inner life for his public on the stage he carried everywhere. Women loved him; men found him

demanding but ingratiating. He managed to enlist the world in the narrative of his disasters. Later, *Herzog* (1964), drawn partly as an act of revenge after one of his marriage-and-friendship convulsions, would depict a beloved protagonist in a state of despair. Herzog ranted comically and proceeded from melodramatic scenes with his wife to episodes with women eager to offer solace. Such a scenario is unreal to experience—most of us, when mired in despair, are not beloved—but Saul's star turn, dominating his own theater, helped to make it seem possible in his special case.

Of course, talent and reputation contributed to what in the Kennedys would come to be called charisma. Saul's prose style married classical elegance to Mark Twain and the pungency of street speech; Yiddish played stickball with Henry James. As a young man, he rode the elements with terrific energy. He could *spritz* like a Lower East Side comedian and then lament like the biblical prophets. His fate as a writer was to insist that words matter, his own most of all; suffering matters, his own absolutely; and he was able to enlist an audience in his struggle to survive, marked and measured by the works-in-progress that devoured his life.

He performed jazzy riffs on his good education, Hebrew school, University of Wisconsin, University of Chicago, Trotskyism, making neediness the baseline. He never questioned the appropriateness of his stance at the center of the stage. Among contemporary novelists, he was surely the most serious about reading, studying, learning, and using it all, adding it all up. It was unified by that keening cry from the heart. Saul needed, needed, needed.

ONE MORNING in the late 50's I drove with the novelist Ralph Ellison and his big black dog to Tivoli, New York, where Ralph and Saul were sharing the rambling old Hudson River house in which another of Saul's marriages had ended. The dog grew agitated from the long trip confined in an automobile, and when Ralph stopped at an office at Bard College to pick up his mail, the dog began furiously barking and leaping. There seemed to be a discipline contest between Ralph and his dog. Ralph said, "Don't let him out," while in his stately way he proceeded to go collect the mail.

Piteously disillusioned at this desertion by his master, the dog let go a flood, a sheet, an avalanche of piss. I bolted out of the car and the dog followed. Now the dog was zestfully leaping about on the green. My flanks were dripping. Ralph reappeared, and commented with extreme irritation: "I told you not to let him out."

Later, while I stood naked in the yard of the house, hanging my soaked clothes on a line to dry, Saul talked about the state of his career. "I want to be like Tolstoy," he said, "more philosopher than anything else."

"More than a great novelist?" I asked, shivering, watching the steam rise from the clothes I had dipped into a soapy bucket. "The *later* Tolstoy? 'The Kreutzer Sonata?' 'What Is Art?' Where he denied Shakespeare and *Anna Karenina*? Why that?"

"One more book," he said, "and my position will be impregnable."

In the house in Tivoli he read aloud from the manuscript of *Henderson the Rain King* (1959) while I tried to stifle my impatience, sometimes asking, "Couldn't I just read it by myself?" But he needed to hear his own voice, test his rhythms, bounce them off others. Since I was there, I would do.

In this novel about a millionaire's mid-life crisis I missed the gritty blues of his other books, his authentic monologuing plaint, and it seemed to me he was trying to put himself into a WASP aristocrat body that he did not in fact possess. I wondered if he was competing with the New England writers he reacted against, while creating a fable about a man's search for his destiny that was indebted to Kafka and Melville. Was this part of constructing that "impregnable" position? I thought he was doing what he said not to do: writing from the head, not the heart; idea-writing, although in the end his heart's cry interrupted the plan.

As for building his reputation, *Henderson the Rain King* seems not to have been a mistake, even if the book held less appeal for some of his admirers. There are those who like it best of all his work. As he said of another writer's novels, it became a favorite for university instruction in American-lit courses. Professors enjoyed teaching it because there was so much to explain.

Himself, he didn't like to explain his writing, but he loved to read it aloud. "I'm a bird," he said, "not an ornithologist."

UNTIL I moved from New York to San Francisco in 1960, our friendship went through ups and downs with periods of intense intimacy; that is, Saul confided his troubles, I listened and felt warm about being invited in. Occasionally he stayed with me in New York and gave me the difficult gratification of hinting that I stood between him and some desperate act at the high window. These threats didn't interfere with his intent sessions bent over the notebooks with their ruled lines upon

which his fountain pen tracked his imagination and indignation. I learned that people don't usually kill themselves in the middle of composing the suicide note.

I sought his approval for my own writing and sometimes got it. His words were used in advertising my books. I was still a young writer; he was a maestro; I felt both grateful and privileged to share his life's disasters.

When I left the east coast, and therefore became unavailable during crises, the ups and downs of our friendship transformed themselves into a prolonged down. We exchanged letters for a while, but he needed regular nursing care. Others filled the requirement. I was irritated that he didn't include "The Heart of the Artichoke," the story he had praised so highly, in an anthology he edited. "I forgot," he said, shrugging. "Why take such a thing seriously? I just forgot."

He was right. It was merely my own writer's vanity that was aggrieved. But the advice not to take it seriously was hard to accept, coming from a writer whose spirit could be broken by a slighting review in the *Deseret News*.

In the early 60's, as a member of the international jury meeting in various European locales to award the Formentor Prize, I argued for Bellow. One year the favored French candidate was Nathalie Sarraute, a leader of the fashionable *nouveau roman* group. As a friend of her daughter, I had known her during my student days in Paris. (The daughter's husband *pro tem* was the journalist Stanley Karnow. He and I bought little Renault 4CV automobiles at the same time, and our wives had in common a resentment of our rude habit of running outdoors when it rained to make sure our cars were not melting.)

The Formentor deliberations were supposed to be secret; of course they were not, especially since the French delegation did not get its way about Nathalie Sarraute. Saul Bellow received the prize.

Later, when I saw Sarraute in Paris, the grand old lady looked me keenly in the eye and greeted me with a mantra which she repeated fairly frequently that Paris season: "*Ah, Airbair! C'est vous le gangster.*"

Barney Rosset of Grove Press, the organizer of the American delegation, asked me to present the award at a ceremony in New York. I felt pleased to have made a case, pleased for Saul, although at that point we were already not close. We were not really friends anymore. But as always when I saw him, the old warmth and gratitude welled up.

I handed him the check. Photographs were taken

for the newspapers. We ate canapés, drank wine. A woman showed up who had been a lover of Saul's, then found employment as a character in one of his books, and she picked an argument with me. "The really great writer, the one who should have been given the prize"—the writer she was currently studying—"is Ionesco. He's *international*."

"I like his plays," I said. "*The Lesson, The Bald Soprano*, they've been running forever at the Théâtre de la Huchette. When I'm in Paris and I see the posters, I know nothing has changed around there, no matter that everything has changed."

"*Rhinoceros!*" she cried. "The metaphors, the myths! Compared to Ionesco, Saul is only. . . ." She wouldn't say it. She shook her curls with that ferocity which he had captured in his fictional portrayal. "And take it from me, I *know*," she announced, mandibles compressed, teeth gritting.

I remembered his image of a woman hiding a dagger in her stocking.

"Saul was, let me tell you how that bozo treated me—compared to Ionesco—"

Maybe it was in her garter belt, the dagger.

HERZOG TURNED out to be Saul's most popular book, his best-selling novel after *The Adventures of Augie March*, which had first broken through for a large public. Comic and sad, spiced with rants in the form of letters, *Herzog* was drawn directly from his personal travails, cuckoldry, a turbulent divorce, treason by protégé. He put the wife, the protégé, and friends into the book with hardly any disguise, as if the story was intended to be not so much *about* them as *against* them. The letters Herzog wrote to world figures were entertaining, garrulous, alternately wise, crazed, and self-mocking. He poured himself into this man-with-heart, Herzog, ranting, wronged, the seeker betrayed.

Self-justification gave an aspect of troubling ambiguity to the book. He intended to be the American Dostoevsky, but funny; the American Tolstoy, but a close witness to the times. But neither of his Russian masters would have portrayed himself as innocently aggrieved and yet fatally attractive to women. Most men know from experience that, when overwhelmed by jealousy, they are in a mood to grovel, whine, and smell bad—not very appealing. They may find nurses, but the sexy and delightful women tend to cross the road when they slump into view.

Herzog, despite his frenzies, remains the most charming man in the world; or so Saul seemed to hope; or so he wrote him. This made his revenge

on life too perfect. The novel was flawed by its special pleading, its lyric of self-love.

Perhaps what made me uneasy is what appealed to both the large public and the National Book Award judges. Herzog's dire suffering didn't get in the way of fun. His letters to the great, alive and dead, were marinated in Saul's learning and his moral passion to change the world, or at least punish it. The challenges of disaster in love and friendship, divorce laws and night sweats, were given chipper colors and a style that reached for the lugubrious in a middle-aged scholar's yearning. Bathroom spying approached French-farce mechanism, with no French-farce mechanical cool. Yet the book allowed readers to perch on the bench as spectators at a circus of pain. It didn't disturb too much. The trapeze whirled, and the clown fell safely into the sawdust. The elephants danced, dropped their elephant doo on the fallen clown, and he arose as a hero, covered with flowers, embraced by all. The book was an original and intelligent entertainment, a consolation.

A mutual friend of ours, call him Professor X, wrote to Saul to congratulate him on his National Book Award and also to give him his response to *Herzog*. Professor X, a man with severe and incurable physical problems, in lifelong pain, wrote admiringly of the book and with delight about the acclaim, but added a fateful sentence: "Of course, your novel doesn't solve my problems."

Saul cut off all connection. Professor X was bewildered and hurt. He was about to retire from his job, his body rapidly giving way. I hoped to be an intermediary, described the troubles of our friend and asked Saul why he was so angry. "I can't be interested in what goes on with him," he said.

"What happened?"

"He wrote me a poison-pen letter."

The author of *Herzog*, with a protagonist who poured his advice, suggestions, and complaints into the mails, had received a letter from an old friend that ended a long association. This seemed a bizarre twist on the novel. I believed the letter must have been ruder than Professor X had said. I asked to see a copy, and of course, like a good academic, Professor X had made one. The letter was dense with praise and goodwill. But it did contain that offense: "Your novel doesn't solve my problems."

All the honors available worldwide couldn't relieve Saul's touchiness. Receiving hundreds of clippings with rave notices, he was still the man who could be thrown into a raging funk by that bad review in the *Deseret News* of Salt Lake City (or was it the *Rocky Mountain News* of Denver?).

MORE THAN fifty years of friendship and non-friendship include too many harsh memories. They begin, after gratitude, with ordinary puzzlement that a writer and man who inspired part of a generation, altered the tone of a literary period, wrote with such grace, nonetheless lived his life with flaws both large and petty, like other people. The flaws seemed to be magnified by the fineness of his achievement. Saul wrote in the rhythms of city speech, but stylized, pursuing the sense of his troubled American life. His anxiety made him frantic. He reflected upon each moment, defending himself with wit and charm. Again and again, he almost, temporarily, mastered his experience. And then the victory passed. He draped his life's story in a prose that served to calm him—almost, temporarily—by displaying his nakedness fetchingly clothed. The narrative sometimes had the innocence of a boyish daydream, sometimes of a boy's nightmare. The discourse both quickened and heartened his readers.

It wasn't just style, the playful surface, the watchfulness. He really wanted to discover What It All Meant (he would never put it that way). His gifts enabled him to edge abruptly into scenes of vivid desire and grief, as in the last paragraphs of the great novella, *Seize the Day* (1956). During the best moments, he shared his sense of our lives in a way impossible for writers of mere self-justification and confession. The path of self-justification, he used to say, has been worked so deep that all you can see is the top of the heads of the writers who follow it.

The images in *The Victim* of a pair of tormentors chained together one hot summer in New York, or Augie March wrestling in Chicago, or the failed poet Von Humboldt Fleisher (in *Humboldt's Gift*, 1975) raving in the grip of mania, and especially Tommy Wilhelm, the protagonist of *Seize the Day*, weeping for himself and mankind at the funeral of someone he doesn't know, will endure as the memories of Saul's personal faults fade. Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Melville, Kafka, D.H. Lawrence, and Unamuno were not saints in real life, either. Their work and Saul's teach something about generosity.

The effect of his presence was also generous for other writers. The example of his success invited to the feast those who followed after him in the priestly—rabbinic—calling of story-teller, lyric poet, questing philosopher. For a later generation, his rich use of vernacular speech energized the American language as Rabelais and Verlaine did for French, as Shakespeare and Laurence Sterne did for English, as Whitman and Twain did. Of this doing and redoing, there needs to be no end. The

playfulness, grace, and grasp of American urban yearning by a writer from a Yiddish-speaking family resonated especially for other Jewish writers. We too could be Americans in the American language. (I am old enough to have been informed by a friendly editor that I should spell my name "Gould" when a first story of mine appeared in her magazine.)

Saul's persistent heartfelt *I want, I want, I want*—his own cry and that of his protagonists—derived both from his condition as an outsider and the increasing recognition that being inside is no solution, either. Sometimes he glamorized his neediness by turning it into heroic appetite, as in *Henderson the Rain King*, elegantly but with a querulous edge, in a bewildering rush of haughty self-pity. No story or novel could settle matters for him. He never stopped trying. He turned away congratulations for his many prizes (Nobel, Pulitzer, National Book Award) by confiding that they interfered with his real business.

When he turned against old friends, such as a lawyer in Chicago whom he lampooned in one book, he was merciless, and they felt crushed. I know three people who wrote novels intended as revenge for what he had written about them. Their books were not published; rage and frustration provide unreliable fuel for inspiration. But when Saul wrote a book *against*, he had larger things in mind than self-justification and punishment of enemies. Freshets of soul and wit scampered through the prose, as if his essence were a glacier, the top warmed by the sun, chunks breaking off and sparkling streams pounding down the ice.

He wanted to be like Tolstoy, both a teller of tales and an inspirer, a moral philosopher; and he wanted to solve his own problems. Late in life, when he was ill with a failing heart, a friend said to him, "I hope you're getting better," and he answered, "I've been getting better my whole life, but look where it's gotten me."

STROLLING WITH Saul down the Rue de Verneuil during the early days of our friendship, around the Rue du Bac, back up to the Café Le Rouquet at the corner of the Boulevard Saint-Germain and the Rue des Saint-Pères—across the street from the garden of the Russian church—talking and talking amid that peculiar Paris smell of Gauloise Bleu, red-wine piss, and flowers, I happened to speak of Sinclair Lewis, who was still alive and writing his worn-out, alcoholic last novels. As a boy, when I first discovered grownup books, *Babbitt*, *Main Street*, and *It Can't Happen Here* opened doors to

the world outside Lakewood, Ohio. But by 1950 it seemed that Lewis's fingers were merely punching the typewriter, his rage had devolved to hysteria, the satire was diminished into abuse of a world he no longer fathomed. His erotic yearning—I was in my early twenties—seemed pathetic in an old man.

Saul interrupted, turning his warm and amused gaze on me, with a reproach that was just, aimed exactly right, naming the lack of generosity in a young man's sniping against his elders. "Don't count any writer out until he's gone."

These words imposed a long silence. I had a vision of eternity like the one called forth by one of my freshman professors, Oscar J. Campbell, when our class read Lucretius on time and death and he spoke of his stroke and then stopped speaking, lowering his head in contemplation of the unknowable. I accepted the shame Saul's reminder brought down upon me.

Decades later, among my brother Sid's papers after his death in 1999, I found a letter from Saul to me, written in response to a story of Sid's that I had sent to *The Noble Savage*, the journal Saul edited for two years in the early 1960's. Saul's letter was full of good counsel, generous encouragement, and I had given it to my brother in the hope that it would nudge him toward finishing the endless, never completed novel that he spent forty years writing.

I wrote Saul now in a flood of remembrance and gratitude, and in sadness for our faded friendship. His reply was immediate and full of compassion about losses, his own and mine of my brother, and regret that we had "neglected to attend to our friendship." Again I recalled his reproach when, aged twenty-four, I ridiculed Sinclair Lewis for his frantic and decrepit late novels. "Don't count any writer out until he's gone."

We were back in touch, attending to our friendship. He wrote tenderly about Janis, his fifth wife, who kept him alive, he said, through caring, love, and the example of her youth. When he was eighty-four and she was pregnant, some women expressed anger at what they considered his sexist behavior. There is no symmetry in the matter; a man of eighty-four can father a child. "I try to keep in practice," he said. Justice was hardly the point here.

On a balmy day in October 1999, we had lunch outdoors at the Nob Hill Café in San Francisco, and then sat in the sun on a bench in Huntington Park, both of us—I'm not reading minds here—remembering our Paris days when we used to pass the time like this. But we weren't talking about Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, or the daily news of the trials of Nazi collaborators. He talked about his life in Boston and Vermont, about his regret for needing to fly with a helper now that his wife's pregnancy was too advanced for her to travel with him. She wanted their child. She knew what the conditions were. He spoke about his end of the deal with a certain wryness, with an energetic resignation, his head cocked as he laughed about oncoming inevitabilities. "I always prided myself on my sense of smell. I always prided myself on my memory. I'm losing them." When he laughed, throwing his head back, he was a boy again.

And then he said it was time for his nap. He took my arm as we walked back to the Huntington Hotel. That night he was having dinner with his eldest son, Gregory, whom I had known as a child in Paris. This father, grandfather, and father-to-be, still meaning to be a better writer and a better man, was hoping to mend his fences at a crucial time. "He has gripes about me he doesn't want to give up," he said. "I don't blame him."

Among Arab Reformers

Joshua Muravchik

IT WAS the challenge of Islamist terrorism that impelled George W. Bush to jettison, as he put it, 60 years of American policy emphasizing stability as our key goal in the Middle East in favor of a policy emphasizing freedom and democracy. The theory behind this is that, just as democracies are less likely to initiate wars, so they will be less likely to give rise to terrorism. Likewise, Bush has embraced the argument of Natan Sharansky that peace between Israelis and Arabs is contingent on the rise of democracy among the Arabs, especially the Palestinians.

Bush's approach, which has given rise to American military action in Iraq and political interventions elsewhere, has attracted its share of criticism. Among their many points, skeptics ask whether there are really any native democrats to be found in the Middle East who could be the backbone of a new political order. Doubts have also been expressed about whether democracy would in fact make this region—where the most extreme or chiliastic positions have often seemed the most popular—more peaceful or less inclined to terrorism.

But what, in the meantime, have the Arabs been saying among themselves? As a long-time student of American efforts to promote democracy, I have

been particularly interested in and impressed by President Bush's determination to transform the political culture of the Middle East. In addition to closely following events in Iraq, I have seized every opportunity to meet and talk with reformist intellectuals and activists elsewhere in the region. An earlier report on some of my conversations, "Listening to Arabs," appeared in COMMENTARY in December 2003. The present article, which is something of a follow-up, concentrates on the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Egypt, two key centers of democratic ferment.

In the wake of the Palestinian presidential election of January 2005, widely hailed as a landmark on the path toward Arab democracy, I was especially glad to accept an invitation to a conference in the West Bank city of Ramallah this past March. To be sure, I inquired of knowledgeable friends whether it would be safe for someone of my ilk (Jewish, neoconservative) to attend such an event, and had been duly reassured. But on the morning I was to leave Washington, my eye stopped on an Internet news item from the Middle East. Only a day earlier, a large gathering of reformers in a Ramallah hotel had been disrupted by gunmen who smashed the furniture, herded the attendees outside, and fired shots into the air to punctuate their point: the meeting was hereby adjourned.

I dashed off an e-mail to Riad Malki, the head of the nongovernmental organization (NGO) sponsoring the conference, whom I had met at other in-

JOSHUA MURAVCHIK, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and a frequent contributor to COMMENTARY, is the author of *Exporting Democracy and the newly released The Future of the United Nations* (AEI Press).

ternational gatherings and had come to like and respect. A one-time activist with the extremist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Malki had become an apostle of democracy and peace. He replied promptly: there would be guards at the conference, and my safety was his solemn responsibility. Comforted, I headed for the airport.

STILL ADORNING many walls as I entered Ramallah were campaign posters for Mustafa Barghouti, an anti-establishment presidential candidate last January. This in itself seemed to me a positive sign: in the "election" a decade earlier, Yasir Arafat, whose victory was in any case foreordained, made sure that no opponent could campaign freely.

The conference, sponsored by Malki's Center for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development and a second NGO, met at a large, well-equipped facility built with foreign donations. In his opening remarks, Malki called it "a new experience in Palestine and even in the Arab world . . . to create an interactive relation between governed and government." Some 450 Palestinians had turned up; on the first day, they were linked by video to another 150 in Gaza and 50 in Beirut. The sessions lasted four days, morning to night, and although we stopped for meals, almost all of the scheduled coffee breaks were canceled to allow for additional discussion. There were five to ten Europeans present, but only one other American.

The opening address was given by Ahmed Qureia, the Palestinian prime minister. Known more for his party loyalty than for intellectual audacity, Qureia nevertheless posed a series of questions for his fellow Palestinians that I found both provocative and germane:

What political system do we want? What kind of state? What kind of Jerusalem? What right of return? What relations with surrounding states? What is achievable?

Where is our strength: in the reasonableness of our cause or in the justice of our cause? Do we continue our resistance by peaceful means or by military means and attacks on civilians? Do we want a revolutionary legitimacy or a constitutional legitimacy?

With this, the conference turned to its announced subject: "Ten Years of the Palestinian Authority: Evaluation, Assessment, Prospects for the Future."

Near the entrance to the auditorium, a life-size cardboard cutout of the late chairman Arafat had smiled broadly at us as we passed; inside, the criticisms of his legacy were intense. Hassan Khresheh,

deputy leader of the legislature, decried Arafat's absolute and absolutely corrupt rule, which, he said, "had imposed a new value system" on Palestinians:

Anyone who asked for a prime minister was punished. . . . We did not see anyone held accountable for stealing public funds. The monetary authority was hidden from the people. Judicial power has been non-existent.

At-Tayeb Abd al-Raheem, a leader of Fatah, then echoed Khresheh's point, as did Ghassan al-Khatib, a member of the Palestinian cabinet. I had encountered al-Khatib a year earlier as my adversary on a television talk show broadcast from the Persian Gulf. When I referred to Arafat on air as a "world-class liar," al-Khatib protested to the host: "I would never have agreed to come on this program if I knew what kind of person you were pairing me with." Now, with Arafat in his grave, al-Khatib sounded a very different note.

True, the indictments were leavened with excuses and praise. "It was a patriarchal system, and we accepted it," said al-Raheem. According to Nabil Amr, a legislator, "We used to have free discussions with Arafat, but the problem was that this was only in closed rooms." (Amr, who knew whereof he spoke, had been shot through the window of his home the previous summer after challenging Arafat in public, losing a leg.) Several speakers repeated the most telling encomium: "he gave us our identity."

In context, Arafat's undimmed status as a national icon made the criticisms of him all the more impressive. No less striking were the speakers' descriptions of the sort of political system with which they wanted to replace his "patriarchy." Al-Raheem spoke of rule of law, separation of powers, and "diffusion of authority." Azmi Shuebi, a parliamentarian, stressed checks and balances. A prominent Ramallah lawyer expounded on the importance of judicial independence. Nabil Amr said: "We need a rule-of-law state. Palestinian people want to see a policeman in the street and a court and a parliament and other structures. The people are sick of chaos."

Several participants reinforced this point from the floor, including a young Ramallah woman in a *hijab* and, via video connection, a woman in Gaza. On the other hand, some among the audience defended Arafat or expressed unease at the sully of their national symbol, while several others pointedly asked his critics, most of them former PA officials, why they had not spoken out while he was still alive, or publicly resigned.

These were just a few of the eddies in the torrent of pent-up criticism, complaint, and argument that

poured forth whenever the microphone was opened to the floor. Innumerable subjects were raised: economics, education, law, the Israeli occupation, Arab tribalism, capital punishment, and more. Some speakers were general, pleading for experts who could “explain the causes of our weakness . . . and recommend solutions” or urging their fellow Palestinians to recognize that “the main problem is not in the law; it is in ourselves.” Others shouted and shook their fists, turning red in the face and seeming on the edge of physical violence, only to return to their seats with satisfied smiles after having vented their spleen. Despite the long hours and canceled coffee breaks, ardent participants were left vying for recognition at the end of each session.

IF THERE was much to warm a democrat’s heart in the spirited talk about Palestinian governance, there was, alas, no comfort at all to be had in the discourse about peace with Israel. A single day of the conference had been set aside for this topic—a sign, I thought, of the organizers’ desire to move beyond wallowing in victimhood. And indeed they were attacked for this decision.

Unlike every other session, this one began with a solo speaker, who, again in contrast to other presentations, appeared to have been given no time limit. The speaker was Hani al-Hassan, a long-time Arafat confidant, the past holder of various PA posts, including minister of the interior—and the man presumed to be behind the shoot-up of the Ramallah hotel the day before I left home. Giving him an outsized spot on the program, it occurred to me, may have been a way of insuring that nothing similar would occur here. When I asked an organizer why there were no other speakers, he replied that al-Hassan’s views were so embarrassing that no one wanted to share a platform with him.

Whether he was an embarrassment to the other Palestinians I cannot say, but al-Hassan’s account of the history of the Arab-Israel conflict was certainly novel to my ears. In the early 1960’s, he explained to us, President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt had sent a secret message to President John F. Kennedy, proposing to resolve the regional conflict on the basis of a return of half the 1948 Palestinian refugees to their homes. Kennedy responded positively, and the two sides were near agreement—“so the Zionist forces assassinated Kennedy.” Then, in 1989, President George H.W. Bush visited Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir to ask him “to stop stirring up civil war in Lebanon.” Al-Hassan claimed precise knowledge of their conversation: “I

have the minutes of their meeting that we obtained from intelligence.” It seems that Shamir refused Bush’s request, declaring that “Israel would not make peace until Iraq is destroyed.” This, al-Hassan said knowingly, is what “we are witnessing before our eyes.”

Nor was al-Hassan’s the most fanciful version of history on offer. A well-dressed middle-aged woman who was sitting next to me took the floor to explain that “world Zionism moved from Canada to New York because it’s the financial center and the place to influence Congress and the UN. World Zionism makes these decisions and puts them through Congress before they are even revealed to Israel.” When she sat down again, I asked her about the Canada part. Introducing herself, she explained that she had lived in the U.S. for ten years doing public relations for the Arab League, that the Zionist movement was based in Calgary until the 1970’s because “that was where the oil was,” and that she had had many Jewish friends. “One used to work for the Israel lobby, but he adopted a black child, and the Jewish school would not admit his son. There was even an attempt on his life.”

Nor, finally, were the tales told by al-Hassan and by my neighbor the most virulent to be heard. Although the sponsors were liberals, a place on the program had been given to a speaker from Hamas, who lambasted the Palestinian Authority for having “abandoned the pillar of Palestine ‘from the river to the sea’” and averred that “there will be no Palestinian state as long as the Zionist enemy exists.” A member of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) similarly lamented that “Oslo [was] the source of all the problems we are living with today,” while another claimed that “Sharon has a plan to kill as many Palestinians as possible; all Zionist leaders have had this goal.” A teleconferenced participant from Beirut exhorted his auditors to “oppose the idea of a homeland for the Jews,” to which a speaker from the floor added that “Zionism is the biggest piracy of all time.”

The two Israelis on the program did nothing to change the general tone. One, Muhammad Ali Taha, said:

They call us the “Arabs of Israel,” but we are not the Arabs of Israel. We are the Palestinian Arab nationality in Israel. We are the Arabs *in* Israel, not the Arabs *of* Israel. When the refugees are allowed to return, in whatever numbers, we will be the ones who will greet them: welcome back to your land.

The other Israeli was a Jew named Ilan Halevi, a Marxist ideologue of some sort who represents the PLO at the Socialist International. "Since 1948," he instructed us, "the Israeli side has always sought to militarize the conflict . . . whereas the Palestinians have always tried to turn to other realms such as legality."

Admittedly, there were a few voices of a different sort, and it was clear the organizers themselves were less than happy with the militant tone. They regained some ground in a speech by Miguel Moratinos, the European Union's representative to the PA. Expatiating on Europe's strong support for the Palestinian cause, he also issued an unequivocal statement against violence: "The armed *intifada* was a mistake. By military means you will not get your dream." Malki hastened to praise this "fine and brave speech from a friend of the Palestinian people."

At lunch I found myself seated next to a taciturn, middle-aged man who, from his modest apparel, I would have taken for a laborer until he identified himself as an engineer. In passable English, he dwelled on how tired the Palestinians were of the *intifada*, and how they longed to be able to resume working in Israel. I suggested that Israelis were also tired. "Not as much as we are," he replied.

I wish I could say that my lunch companion represented more than half of the equation of Palestinian sentiment on this issue, but at a final session devoted to crafting recommendations, the most the participants could agree on regarding peace was a proposal "to maintain the *hudna* [ceasefire] at least temporarily."

IF MY days in Ramallah left me somewhat more encouraged about the prospects of Palestinian democracy than about Palestinian readiness for peace, a later trip took me to a place where presumably the issue of peace has long been settled but the issue of democracy is very much up for grabs.

Residents of Cairo refer to their city as "the mother of the world." One might more justly say that it, or rather Egypt as a whole, is the center of the Arab world, the wellspring of its cultural and intellectual life and home to nearly a third of all Arabs. If, following Iraq, Egypt were to turn toward democracy, much of the rest of the region would likely follow. Conversely, if democratization were to fail to take hold in Egypt, it is hard to see how, in the long term, America's overall project could be judged a success.

Rage at the United States is the order of the day

in Egypt, as it is in the rest of the Arab world. Indeed, a Zogby poll has showed a plurality of Egyptians saying they dislike not just American policy but Americans *per se*. Nevertheless, in my interviews with political activists, in my daily excursions, and in a number of public talks, I encountered nothing of the kind. On the contrary, I found Egyptians to be friendlier and more welcoming than people I have met almost anywhere else in my travels.

In meetings where I spoke, audiences seemed hungry to hear my answers to their questions even when the questions themselves were very angry. At Cairo University, over a hundred students showed up for a talk billed as an exposition of "neoconservatism"—a phenomenon that, though hardly understood, is viewed as the essence of everything infuriating about America. I spoke for 45 minutes and took questions for another 90, at which point my hosts called a halt even though tens of hands were still waving in the air. As refreshments were served, I was mobbed by students wanting to talk further. Finally I handed out every business card in my pocket, telling them to e-mail me. Something similar happened at an evening in Alexandria, where a knot of hostile college-aged questioners pleaded with me to come for coffee so that we could continue the argument.

Apart from the way I was received, I found that attitudes toward America were somewhat more nuanced than I had anticipated. Although most of the people I spoke to were uninhibited about criticizing Washington, they also frankly welcomed the pressure that the administration was putting on the Egyptian government. And although most expressed skepticism about America's sincerity or lasting power, they were clearly aware that the political ferment in their society owed much to George Bush's advocacy and actions.

The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR), the country's most venerable human-rights group, had been refused legal recognition for more than a dozen years; recognition was finally granted in the wake of the U.S. occupation of Iraq, and the group's chairman told me that the large American footprint in the region had everything to do with his government's about-face. The year's big political development was the announcement of Egypt's first multi-candidate presidential election, proclaimed by President Hosni Mubarak the day after Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice canceled a planned visit to Egypt in protest against the imprisonment of the opposition politician Ayman Nour. "Pressure in the re-

gion is very high," the leader of another human-rights group said to me, "so we have a flu of democratization."

Not that Egyptians believe that Mubarak's opponents stand a chance, or that the seventy-seven-year-old president will fail to secure yet another term in office. Many, however, expressed optimism about a transition to democracy between now and 2010-2011, when the next parliamentary and presidential elections are scheduled. A number of recent developments, some of which I was able to witness with my own eyes, seemed to presage such change.

During my stay in Egypt, the government-appointed National Council for Human Rights, composed almost entirely of members of the establishment and chaired by former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, issued a surprisingly tough report accusing the state security forces of systematic abuse, documenting nine cases of death by torture, and calling for an end to the decades-old official state of emergency. Only two or three of the council's 27 members are independent human-rights figures, but over the course of a year they had succeeded in pressuring the rest to adopt a much tougher stand than intended.

Then, the Judges Club of Alexandria, representing about one-fifth of the nation's jurists, issued a manifesto demanding judicial independence, later seconded by the still larger Cairo club. The judges threatened to boycott this year's presidential and parliamentary elections if their demands were not met.

A step forward was also taken for freedom of the press. Three journalists at *al-Masry al-Youm* ("The Egyptian Today"), the country's most independent daily, had been sentenced in absentia to a year in prison for libel; their offense lay in reporting that the minister of housing was under investigation for corruption. The paper's staff staged a sit-in protest in the courtroom, and the next day Egypt's rather timid journalists syndicate followed suit with its own demonstration. The government promptly announced a new law under which libel would no longer be punishable by jail terms but would be a matter for civil adjudication as in Western countries.

These events were quite apart from the street demonstrations that have attracted so much attention in the West and that have been increasing in size and tempo. The government's response has been to intimidate protestors with huge throngs of police; armored cars and officers clothed in riot gear were a frequent sight as I moved about Cairo.

Several oppositionists, knowing that the security forces were tapping their cell phones, told me gleefully that they had been hitting back by staging conversations about phantom demonstrations, thus provoking costly police mobilizations to no purpose. What all this action in the streets would lead to, no one knew.

SAAD EDIN IBRAHIM, the former political prisoner and dean of Egyptian dissidents, recently described his country as torn among "three visions of the Arab future," belonging respectively to "the autocrats, the democrats, and the theocrats." As a generalization, this may be fair enough, but from up close the picture looks more textured. For one thing, each of the three components is itself riven. For another, forces are at play that do not fit easily into any of the three categories.

Consider first the autocrats, meaning the incumbent regime. There are the throngs of police and the systematic surveillance, imprisonment, and torture of dissenters like Ibrahim and Ayman Nour. There are the three new tabloids that appeared as if out of nowhere whose principal purpose seems to be to calumniate Nour. There is the deliberate stoking of anti-Americanism through, for example, a vicious press campaign against six NGO's for having accepted a total of \$1 million from the U.S. Middle East Partnership Initiative. (This, from a government that slurps down \$2 billion a year from the same poisoned chalice.) And there are stalwart factotums like Osama el-Baz, the debonair presidential adviser who, when I asked him what had led to the announcement of a multi-candidate presidential race, answered with a straight face that Mubarak's entire 24 years in office had been one unbroken march of reform.

But that is only one side of the regime. There are also the rebellious judges. There is Ismail Sergeldin, head of the Alexandria Library, a magnificent structure designed by the government as a symbolic reenactment of the ancient world's greatest repository of learning; there, in 2004, a gathering of intellectuals from all the Arab countries had issued as clarion a call for democracy as one could imagine. And there is Hala Mustafa, editor of the government-sponsored journal *Democracy*, who, when I interviewed her in her luxuriously appointed office, startled me with the fierceness of her denunciations:

In order to have a real election, fair and free . . . we need to switch from a closed system to an open one. The closed system is mainly run by the secret police and the one party [and] the state-controlled media. . . . This is the heavy

legacy of the past and of the socialist one-party system that has existed for the last 50 years. It is not easy to shift from this type of regime to one with real elections without changing the whole system.

Despite the occasional words of scorn for figures like Serageldin and Mustafa that I heard from oppositionists, and setting aside the ethics of their choice to stay inside the system, my conversations with them and many others made it clear that, on the question of democratization, the camp of the autocrats is far from a monolith.

As for the camp of the democrats, this also has its complexities. There are, to begin with, the liberals. These include not only Ibrahim himself but also Nour and his al-Ghad ("Tomorrow") party, whose name, he told me, had been borrowed from a 19th-century liberal movement. Nour says he was the country's youngest political prisoner when he was locked up as a high-school leader under President Anwar Sadat. In prison, he became the disciple of a fellow inmate named Fouad Serageldin, the uncle of Ismail and the head of Wafd, a party that had spearheaded the forces of liberal nationalism from the end of World War I until the time of Nasser.

Becoming active in Wafd, Nour was elected a member of the National Assembly in 1995 at the age of thirty. He carved out a place for himself, running for deputy speaker and pulling a hundred-odd votes from the ruling National Democrats against their own candidate. Then, clashing with Serageldin's successor, he was expelled from Wafd and with a few colleagues founded al-Ghad. Opposition parties had been outlawed by Nasser and legalized anew under Sadat but only if licensed. It took repeated appeals before al-Ghad secured such recognition in 2004, becoming the country's most clearly independent party. That the authorities should have legalized al-Ghad in one breath and in the next arrested Nour on the charge of forging signatures on the party's application suggests, in itself, a certain disarray within the regime.

I met with other members of the liberal camp as well. Both Hafez Abu Se'da, the leader of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, and Nihad Abu Qomsan of the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, a feminist in a head scarf, impressed me as genuine and thoughtful democrats. Most impressive of all was Hisham Kassem, publisher of *al-Masry al-Youm*, chairman of the board of EOHR, and vice-chairman of al-Ghad. This Western-minded intellectual is also a scion of Bedouin chiefs who sees the struggle for democracy as a continuation of his forebears' ancient battles against central authority.

BUT THERE is also another, better-known side to the democratic camp, and that is the organization called Kifaya, or "Enough," that has been responsible for many of the street demonstrations. This is a coalition of disparate political tendencies whose common goal is the end of Mubarak's rule. I interviewed Abdel Halil Qandil, the group's official spokesman, as he sat beneath two immense portraits of Nasser in his office at a Nasserist party newspaper. He propounded a democratic platform—freedom of the press and assembly, the release of political prisoners, and so forth—while also incongruously insisting that neither Mubarak nor his offspring should be allowed to run for office. When I asked him if Nasser, whose rule was more totalitarian than that of his successors, was a democrat, he replied: "Nasser was a revolutionary." When I repeated my question, he said, "Nasser did not get to complete his project before he was assassinated." (There is no evidence that Nasser died other than by natural causes.)

In contrast to this evasive answer, Qandil's views on economic policy could not have been more clear. He would, he told me, renounce U.S. aid and restore the public sector of the Egyptian economy, building state factories to employ all those without work. When it came to foreign policy he was equally forthright: he would abrogate the peace treaty with Israel.

What he was offering the Egyptian people was, in short, repression, impoverishment, and war, or what might also be described as Nasserism without Nasser. Like Gaullism without de Gaulle, or Peronism without Peron, Nasserism without Nasser is hard to define, but it still retains a mystique in Egypt, and it is a factor missing from Ibrahim's triangle of contending forces. Qandil himself represents the traditional Nasserist party, while another group that broke away to form a new party is no less fierce in its sentiments. Its leader, the parliamentarian Hamadein Sabahi, recently remarked on Egyptian television (as transcribed and translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute): "Any weapon that kills an American is good. . . . I support al Qaeda when it kills Americans."

The two main elements of Nasserism without Nasser are militant nationalism, in this case in the form of pan-Arabism, and socialism. The second of these, exemplified by Qandil's proposals, is also enshrined in the Egyptian constitution, where it acts to retard the country's economic progress. During my stay, the *Egyptian Gazette* ran an exposé of a government-owned "pasta and macaroni factory" that had been padlocked for 25 years awaiting the return

of the foreign experts needed to install new equipment. Like certain blather about “revolution” that I heard among some of the Palestinians in Ramallah, this newspaper story brought home to me how baneful the influence of Communism has been even in countries that did not fall directly under Soviet rule, including in most of the Arab world.

Qandil assured me that Nasserists were the main force within Kifaya. This may or may not have been an empty boast. I also met with George Ishaq, a Copt who is the movement’s coordinator. A large, handsome, voluble man, Ishaq, a former Communist, is more prepossessing than the diminutive, tightly wound Qandil. But what he seemed to be proposing did not sound much different. He handed me Kifaya’s “Declaration to the Nation,” a brief manifesto around which its various constituencies have coalesced. Headed “The Cure of the Ongoing American Occupation and Zionist Devastation Is Political Reform,” it says:

We believe there are two grave dangers which beset our nation today. They are two sides of the same coin, each nourishing the other, and neither curable alone: First, the odious assault on Arab native soil through: a) the U.S. occupation of Iraq; b) the Zionist devastation daily wreaked on the Palestinian people bordering on a holocaust; and c) the designs, including the [American-inspired] Broader Middle East Initiative, to recast the chart and fate of the Arab region and people. All civil and political efforts must be massed and coordinated to ward off this peril to the future survival of the Arab peoples and society. Second, the repressive despotism that pervades all aspects of the Egyptian political system.

Since the specific demands listed in Kifaya’s manifesto concern democratization at home, it might be argued that the incendiary rhetoric should be discounted as a pitch for popular support. But there is no escaping the fact that democracy is advocated here not as a value in itself but as a method for strengthening the heroic fight against America and Israel. Movements that have come to power elsewhere on such programs have regularly discarded their democratic goals in favor of their heroic ones.

THE MOST reasonable and appealing leader of Kifaya I met was the man in whose home the group had been founded. He was Abou Elela Mady, and he was an Islamist, having spent some eighteen years in the Muslim Brotherhood before splitting off to form the al-Wasat (“Center”) party. Over the years, as he has pursued his efforts to le-

galize al-Wasat, Elela Mady has also elaborated positions on democracy, human rights, *sharia*, and the role of women and non-Muslims that diverge notably from the traditional stance of the Brotherhood. In response to a question from me, he said that the party had avoided taking a position on Israel because this was a divisive issue, but that he himself supported diplomatic recognition.

What the example of al-Wasat illustrates is that the third leg of Ibrahim’s triangle—the “theocrats”—is also divided, and indeed may be the most variegated of all. Having officially renounced violence as far back as the 1970’s, the Brotherhood has been assiduously moderating its image. In recent demonstrations, however, its marchers have carried paper flags of Israel and America to stomp on in the ultimate Arab sign of disrespect, and have even shouted for *jihad*. Besides Elela Mady, I also interviewed Essam al-Arian, another leader of the Muslim Brotherhood who likewise spoke about the importance of political freedom and even about the need to “liberalize society”; nevertheless, he stood out as my one clearly hostile interlocutor. I did not attempt to see anyone from Gamaa Islamiya, the group that carried out the 1997 massacre of some 60 European tourists at Luxor—although it, too, has decided to renounce violence.

But for every “theocrat” who abandons violence, another seems ready to take his place. This is illustrated not only by the recent murderous bombings in Sharm el-Sheikh but also by the story of Sayed al-Kamni, a flamboyant atheist writer who in his well-guarded home spoke to me of America’s overdue awakening to the Islamist menace. Since then, he is reported to have bowed to mounting death threats and to have recanted his anti-Islamist writings.

Nor do these exhaust the varieties of Islamism making themselves felt in Egypt, whose future will be determined in part by what happens inside the Islamist camp, perhaps the most popular and surely the most opaque political force on the scene. On the campus of the University of Cairo, I observed approximately two-thirds of the young women covering their heads with scarves; beneath these *bi-jabs*, though, some were carefully made up and wore tight clothing. When I asked some older Egyptian friends what it all meant, they could only respond that they were puzzled and worried.

HOW STRONG are the Islamists, and what do they want? Arab democrats are wrestling with these questions not only in Egypt but across the region. “The problem,” said one Tunisian at an inter-

national conference I attended later in the summer, “is that secularists don’t have any weight but Islamists don’t have a democratic agenda.” He himself advocates “dialogue” with Islamists for the purpose of reforming them. So does Saad Ibrahim in Egypt; his Ibn Khaldun center runs an “Islamic reformation program” aimed at disseminating a “new interpretation of the basic Islamic religious texts that would show that Islamic values are in full compatibility with the principles of human rights and freedoms.”

More controversial than the question of dialogue with Islamists is the question of forming a coalition with them. For the democrats, a bloc with the Islamists holds the tantalizing promise of an instantaneous mass base. Advancing the case for such a coalition, a Lebanese at one conference this summer pointed to the encouraging behavior of contemporary Islamists in power; he cited the current government in Turkey as well as parliamentary participation in Jordan and Lebanon. “What about Iran, Afghanistan, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia?” retorted a Kuwaiti woman, adding that in Jordan the Islamists had opposed changes in the law in order to protect women from “honor killings.”

At another conference, Egyptians who favored collaboration with the Muslim Brotherhood were disputed sharply by one of their countrymen. True, asserted their interlocutor, “The Muslim Brothers now say ‘freedom is the answer’”—a welcome switch from the old slogan “Islam is the answer”—but “if they came to power they would do as Hitler did.” A number of Saudi liberals also expressed dismay at the prospect of such alliances, since the Islamists in their society are their dire enemies. They would altogether prefer to speak only of human rights rather than of democracy. At first I thought they meant that democracy was too radical a platform for their country, but they soon made it clear that they were afraid of a free vote, which could bring to power forces still more repressive than those ruling them today.

Questions about the support enjoyed by Islamists and about the compatibility of Islamism with liberalism are another way of asking whether the region is in fact ready for democracy. One of the more auspicious tokens of change in recent years has been the series of UN-sponsored *Arab Human Development Reports*, each written “by Arabs for Arabs.” The first volume, in 2002, lamented the Arab world’s deficits of knowledge, freedom, and women’s rights. The second, in 2003, focused on the knowledge deficit, while the third, issued this year, bears the welcome title, *Toward Freedom in the Arab World*.

Like its predecessors, this year’s report is unsparing in its criticisms—“however we define rights and freedoms, the level to which they are actually en-

joyed in Arab countries remains poor”—and clear in its democratic prescriptions. Disappointingly, however, and like its immediate predecessor, it is larded with diatribes against Israel and the United States that are as absurd as they are tedious.

For example, the report blames the phenomenon of Arab despotism on America’s willingness to “indulge” any Arab ruler who did not challenge Israel. This ignores the plain fact that the most despotic Arab regimes—Iraq under Saddam Hussein, Syria, Libya—have been precisely those least accommodating to Israel or to America’s Middle East policies. It also claims that “Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is one of the most significant impediments to human development in Arab countries.” If this is true, it is true only in the sense that the report itself exemplifies, namely, that the Arabs’ obsession with Israel has distracted them from the sort of productive thinking and useful activity that would have ensured their own advancement.

WHICH BRINGS me back to the split I observed in Ramallah between the discourse about democracy and the discourse about peace. In fact, nothing is more likely to spur Arabs’ progress toward democracy than overcoming their anti-Israel and anti-American obsession. For this to happen, however, a political consensus would need to be forged that, as I saw in Ramallah, is still far from even being contemplated.

In his speech to the conference there, Prime Minister Qureia asked many of the right questions, not only about the desired political system of a future Palestinian state but about its desired stance toward the world outside it. But, as some in the audience complained, he did not tell them the answers. Worse, in the following months, as Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza neared, Qureia seemed to be trying to steal the thunder of Hamas, for example by referring to the Palestinian people as “the children of [Hamas founder] Ahmed Yassin, the martyr, and the children of all the martyrs,” a standard euphemism for suicide bombers.

In Ramallah as in Egypt this summer, and from the lips of Saudis, Kuwaitis, Tunisians, Lebanese, Iraqis, and others, I heard the voices of people who genuinely yearn for freedom—and I think for peace, too, though this was less clear. Their voices are stronger today than ever before. What happens next in Iraq will, obviously, have a powerful effect on their prospects at home. They deserve whatever support we can give them—and that it will not compromise them to accept—for, from what I also saw and heard, a considerable journey lies ahead before their countries are likely to harken to what they have to say.

Getting Over Oil

Peter W. Huber and Mark P. Mills

THE UNITED STATES consumes about 7 billion barrels of oil a year. Quite a few of those barrels come to our shores from the Persian Gulf, a fact that has elicited, since 9/11, a surprising convergence in our politics. Today, it is not just left-wing environmentalists who complain about our consumption of oil but also a range of sober-minded centrists and conservatives, from commentators like Fareed Zakaria and Max Boot to former Clinton CIA director R. James Woolsey to one-time Republican officials like Robert McFarlane, C. Boyden Gray, and Frank Gaffney. The concerns of these “oil hawks” (or, less felicitously, “geo-greens,” as the *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman calls them) touch only incidentally on the environmental issues that previously drove most energy activists. Their primary aim is not to “save the earth” but rather to secure our own small corner of it.

The oil hawks’ agenda was neatly summarized in a letter sent to President Bush earlier this year by the Energy Future Coalition (EFC), an umbrella group that also includes a range of Democratic pragmatists and Al-Gore-style environmentalists. The EFC’s basic analysis of the problem is as straightforward as it is familiar: America’s dependence on imported oil threatens both our economic well-being and the physical safety of our home-

land. While we face increased consumption by the rising economies of China and India, and thus greater risk to our own supplies, the “foreign interests” that benefit from our dependence—a euphemism for the sundry extremisms of the Middle East—“have used oil revenues in ways that harm our national security.”

The EFC’s basic recommendation is familiar, too: we must consume less foreign oil. “With only 2 percent of the world’s oil reserves but 25 percent of current world consumption,” the oil hawks declare, “the United States cannot eliminate its need for imports through increased domestic production alone.” More innovation on the supply side—“advanced biomass, alcohol, and other petroleum-fuel alternatives,” as well as an expansion of our strategic oil reserves—will help. But the focus, they insist, must be on “demand-side measures,” especially “increased efficiency in our transport system,” with the goal of reducing consumption by about 15 percent—a billion barrels of oil a year—over the next quarter-century.

For Jimmy Carter, who presided over the energy crisis of the late 1970’s, weaning the U.S. from oil was the “moral equivalent” of war. For the oil hawks of the post-9/11 era, our energy dependence is (as Woolsey puts it) “a war issue” plain and simple, one that demands ambitious new regulations, research subsidies, and tax incentives. When Carter told us that we should never again import as much oil as we did in 1979, the country ignored

PETER W. HUBER is a senior fellow of the Manhattan Institute. MARK P. MILLS is a founding partner of Digital Power Capital. They are the coauthors of *The Bottomless Well* (Basic Books, 2005).

him. But times have changed—more so, in fact, than even the seemingly forward-looking oil hawks have recognized.

THE PRICE of oil has fluctuated wildly over the past several decades, thanks largely to the volatile politics of the Middle East. In 1979, when Carter was at his most pessimistic about energy, oil cost \$30 a barrel (in 2005 dollars, which we will use throughout this essay). In the fall of 1980, Iraq's war with Iran knocked a billion barrels of oil from the former's annual output; for the next five years, the mostly Arab members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) held firm to a policy of dramatically reduced production, leading to spot prices in early 1981 above \$80 a barrel.

By 1985, the price of oil had stabilized at \$50, but the Saudis, exasperated by the cheating of other members of the cartel and in possession of unmatched reserves, ramped up production. The price quickly fell to under \$20 a barrel. Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait sent it back up to \$40. By 1998, it had fallen to a historic low of \$12. The battle over oil, many analysts declared, had finally been won. Now, just seven years later, it is said to have been lost again. A barrel costs some \$60, and many forecasters believe that high prices are here to stay.

But price is just part of the picture, and does not by itself tell us much. Even as oil has become much dearer in recent years, saddling Americans with tens of billions of dollars in extra costs, our oil problem, in a strictly economic sense, has become smaller, and promises to become smaller still.

Oil supplies only about 40 percent of the raw energy we use today, and we use it mainly in our cars, trucks, and aircraft. Coal, uranium, natural gas, and hydroelectric dams supply the other 60 percent. These latter fuels—not oil—generate almost all of the power available through our electrical grid. More significantly, about three-fifths of our gross domestic product (GDP) now comes from industries and services that run on electricity. All the fastest-growing sectors—most notably, information technology and telecom—are fueled entirely by electrons.

Even within the energy budget, the relative economic importance of fuel in general, and of oil in particular, is receding. Each year we spend relatively less on raw fuel and relatively more on the hardware—refineries, furnaces, generators, car engines, motors, light bulbs, lasers—needed to transform fuel into highly refined power. At the end of the day, the economy does not much care about the

cost of the fuel alone or of the hardware alone; what matters is the distilled power that the two deliver together.

As we look forward, and even if the price of a barrel rises quite a bit more, there is every reason to suppose that year by year the U.S. economy will continue to grow less sensitive to the price of crude. Yes, we will buy more barrels, and perhaps pay more for them, too. But our GDP will continue to grow faster than our total spending on oil.

Moreover, of the 7 billion barrels of oil (BBO) we currently use each year, only 0.9 come from the Persian Gulf. We produce about 3 billion barrels domestically; our largest foreign suppliers are Canada (0.6 BBO) and Mexico (0.6 BBO); Venezuela and more than a dozen smaller suppliers take care of the rest. Getting to the point where the U.S. need not import any oil from the Middle East would not be very hard.

It would be harder for our allies, particularly Europe and Japan, whose economies are deeply intertwined with our own. These two entities jointly consume over 7 billion barrels of oil a year, a little more than we do, with one third of those barrels imported from the Persian Gulf, and their untapped domestic reserves are far smaller than ours. Nor does our own eventual ability to do without oil from the Middle East change the fact that, for the foreseeable future, massive sums of petrodollars will continue to flow to the region, with all the deleterious geopolitical consequences rightly emphasized by the oil hawks.

WHAT, THEN, are we to make of the oil hawks' call to arms? Much depends on how we define the battle.

There is more comfort to be found on the supply side of the global oil economy than the hawks acknowledge, but not enough. Since 1981, non-OPEC supplies of oil have increased by 5 billion barrels a year—but global demand has risen by 8 billion barrels a year. And the new non-OPEC oil did not come cheap. Gaining access to the 70-billion-barrel reserve located beneath the deep, frigid waters of the North Sea required an enormous capital investment, now embedded in the cost of the 2 billion barrels per year that those wells yield. Tapping the 100 billion barrels under the verdant fields of Kazakhstan has required a \$2.4-billion pipeline just to get things started. Exploiting the 150 billion barrels that Russia thinks it has will require still larger sums. An Exxon Mobil consortium is planning to invest \$12 billion in Siberia just to get the pump primed.

Every time such investments are made, the people who make them must wonder if they will ever get their money back. When prices collapsed in 1997, oil ministers, multinational conglomerates, and wildcatters from Siberia to Texas found themselves ruining the day they had poured cash into expensive new holes. How could they have been so foolish? Saudi Arabia and Iraq alone are capable of pumping oil for under \$5 a barrel from proven reserves that still probably exceed 350 billion barrels. A quick hand on a big spigot is the key to controlling the global market. If a few major producers abruptly choke the flow, they can gouge consumers. If they quickly crank it up again, they can ruin competing producers, who cannot recover their huge capital investments in the face of sharply lower prices.

Some oil hawks have suggested enlarging the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) as a cushion against such potential market shocks. But no plausible expansion would be nearly large enough. The current Reserve has a maximum capacity of 0.7 BBO. This is enough to make sure that tanks and fighter jets will have fuel if a hot war suddenly erupts, but it is not a number that speaks loudly to Middle Eastern potentates sitting on total reserves of 600 billion barrels.

U.S. reserves of the old-fashioned kind—that is, in the ground—are quite a bit larger than the SPR. By current estimates, Washington's 1980 prohibition of oil and gas development in the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve placed a billion barrels per year off limits for 15 years. Another billion barrels per year (at least) lie under waters off the coast of California and in the Gulf of Mexico west of Florida. But Californians like unsullied ocean views when they cruise the coastal highway from Los Angeles to San Francisco, and President Bush is not about to propose any new offshore drilling to his brother, the governor of Florida.

Thus stymied, advocates of supply-side fixes often shift to grander schemes to draw something very much like oil from things that do not look at all like oil wells. There are plenty of candidates. In a pinch, engineers can extract, refine, or synthesize gasoline, or something like it, from almost any combination of carbon and hydrogen. Alberta's tar sands, which currently yield about 0.4 BBO per year, contain at least 180 billion barrels that are recoverable with current technology and over a trillion barrels that will become available as technology improves. Over 10 percent of the American corn crop is used each year to produce an amount of ethanol equivalent to 0.05 BBO; production

could be multiplied tenfold if we grew crops on another 40 million acres that we currently pay farmers not to cultivate.

But these alternatives require huge capital investments, and unless the federal government is committed to maintaining price floors for them with import quotas or through its own purchasing power, few of them (other than the Canadian tar-sand projects) will ever be able to produce ersatz oil cheaply enough to survive the next orchestrated price collapse. The \$20-billion Synfuels Corporation signed into law by Jimmy Carter in 1980 was supposed to yield 0.7 BBO a year by 1992. By December 1985, it had been swept away under a flood of Saudi oil.

WITH THE supply side of the oil market so refractory and unstable, the oil hawks—quietly embracing policies first promoted decades ago by advocates on the Left—have instead put their emphasis on curbing demand. But how?

Over the long run, higher prices would certainly help. Taxes currently translate into about \$11 per barrel of oil in the U.S. (excluding those earmarked to fund highway construction), and as much as \$85 per barrel in Europe and Japan. But suppressing consumption in this way requires political muscle and nerve, a commodity in much shorter supply than petroleum. Consider the Clinton administration's attempt in 1993 to impose the country's first comprehensive energy levy. It would have added a trifling \$3 per barrel to the price of crude, and even so the proposal was resoundingly rejected by the House and Senate, both then controlled by Democrats.

Technological fixes have encountered much less political resistance. Since the 1970's, virtually every proposal for dealing with America's oil problem has recommended doubling the fuel economy of our cars. Progress on this front, today's oil hawks suggest, would cut consumption by as much as 1.5 billion barrels a year.

It would indeed, provided that nothing else changed. But things invariably do change, and always in ways that more than offset the promised gains. Though oil hawks never make note of it, the efficiency of the typical car engine has in fact doubled since 1950; a gallon of fuel now moves a ton of vehicle twice as far as it did then. Much the same has happened in every other sector of the economy. With each unit of energy, we now produce more than twice as much GDP as we did half a century ago.

But we also now consume more than three times

as much total energy. With better engines under the hood, Americans have sharply increased the weight of their cars, the number of miles they drive, and their average speed, all the while adding energy-hungry comforts like air-conditioning. Miles traveled by air have increased even faster, as have freight miles. All of our efficiency gains—and then some—have been swallowed by the rising demand for bigger, better, faster transportation.

To save the day, oil hawks are counting on higher fuel-economy standards to be imposed fleet-wide. These would require car manufacturers to compensate for their fuel pigs by selling roughly equal numbers of dinky little cars. Though the standards are often characterized as an “efficiency” mandate, their real aim is to change how people behave. But such prescriptions invariably fail. They would do nothing to halt the 3-percent annual increase in the total number of miles we drive. Nor would they control how fast we drive, how often two-car households favor the fuel pig in their personal fleets, or how frequently people fly or order goods from the other side of the continent.

Oil hawks (including R. James Woolsey in these pages*) point out that during the 1979-1985 crunch, when federal law prescribed quite strict fuel-economy standards, U.S. oil consumption dropped by about 15 percent. But it was not car manufacturers that delivered the oil savings. Almost all of it came from electric utilities and industrial users, who shifted to other fuels.

Whether developed by the market or mandated by the government, better technology simply does not curb demand over the long term. The British economist Stanley Jevons exposed this paradox in 1865, and all experience since then confirms that he was right. More efficient engineering makes Humvees, monster refrigerators, and watt-guzzling plasma TV's more affordable, and puts relentless upward pressure on our consumption of energy. Even if Americans somehow reached a saturation point in their appetite for energy-hungry machines, there is the rest of the world to consider. China currently consumes just over 2 billion barrels of oil a year, slightly more than Japan, and that is while most of its economy is still pretty much where England's was in 1865. As super-efficient hybrid technology matures, American demand will push the price of core components down sharply, and China will use them to build the \$5,000, 100-mile-per-gallon hybrid rickshaw, affordable to a billion people whose economy is now still powered largely by carbohydrates.

IT IS not by dumb accident that our entire transportation system has been designed to run on refined crude oil. Pound for pound, liquid hydrocarbons deliver far more accessible energy than any other fuel that is economically practicable today. But outside the transportation sector, pounds matter much less, which is one big reason why America's overall energy economy, as we noted earlier, is dominated by much cheaper, non-oil fuels. As opposed to the 7 billion barrels of oil a year that we consume, we use the equivalent of 11 billion barrels in coal, gas, uranium, and hydroelectric power, almost all of which comes from the U.S. and Canada. We already know how to tap these vast resources, and our technology keeps improving.

The trick, then, is to figure out how best to collapse our bipolar energy economy into a single market, one in which non-oil fuels can more readily substitute for oil. Happily, we are already well on the way. During the crunch of 1979-85, utilities in the U.S. quickly shifted away from oil; today we depend on it for just 3 percent of our electric power. The huge opportunity ahead is to use electricity—and thus coal and uranium, principally—to displace still more oil. Doing this will depend on the price of oil, which we cannot control; on the price of electricity, which we can; and on the evolution of technology that will bridge the divide.

Let us begin with the technology. We still use about a billion barrels of oil a year for industrial, commercial, and residential heating. But other forms of high-intensity radiant power now provide more precise, calibrated heating, especially for industrial applications. Substitution is already robustly under way in this sector. Another 1.5 billion barrels of oil are used each year by heavy trucks, delivery vehicles, and buses. These vehicles can be easily modified to run on natural gas, and quite a few already have been.

That leaves our cars and “light trucks” (that is, SUV's), which burn roughly 3 billion barrels of oil a year. The Bush administration has actively promoted hydrogen as a solution, and perhaps someday the U.S. will make that transition. Hydrogen is technically easy, if quite expensive, to extract from water or natural gas, and we have some idea of how to use it as a battery-like storage medium that will allow cars to run indirectly on the non-oil fuels that power the grid. Greens love this possibility because it allows them to envision a day when car-

* See “Defeating the Oil Weapon” in the September 2002 issue of COMMENTARY.

bon-free fuels will be used to propel zero-emission wheels down our highways.

But to get there, it will be necessary to redesign the car completely as well as to create, from scratch, an entirely new distribution system for a gas that is very difficult to handle. The hydrogen option entails a gigantic bet on a wholly new intermediate fuel and on the untried technology required to use it. We know from experience that such bets often end badly.

A more promising solution is the plug-in hybrid, which requires a much more modest technical leap. Alongside their gas tanks, hybrid vehicles are equipped with high-capacity nickel-metal-hydride (and, before long, lithium) batteries that are capable on their own of handling distances under six miles, which represent a substantial share of all car trips. Once the technology for these vehicles is fully developed, with a suitable interface for recharging, all they will require is a place to plug in when parked. The energy trade-off is fairly simple, too: each kilowatt-hour of grid power used by a hybrid replaces roughly a pint of gasoline.

More important, hybrids that are recharged by their own gas engines (as opposed to an electrical outlet) are already on the road. None were available as recently as 1998, but this year over 200,000 will be sold. There are now a dozen different hybrid models in showrooms, and nearly every automaker has more on the drawing boards. This has happened not because of decrees from Washington but because the vehicles are attractive, perform well, and allow their owners to visit the gas station much less frequently. Market forces alone are already in the process of transforming the car into a giant appliance.

AT FIRST glance, shifting to electricity may not seem to make economic sense. After all, kilowatt-hours cost a lot more than oil—the equivalent of about \$160 per barrel if the comparison is made in terms of the raw energy delivered. But electricity is a much higher-grade form of energy. Power delivered through a plug to a hybrid's battery will propel the car at least four times as far as the same amount of energy pumped into the tank as gasoline, which currently retails for about \$100 per barrel. Such trade-offs are no less economically attractive in other sectors, where they are also occurring. Because a microwave, as opposed to a gas range, heats only the soup, it is cheaper to use in the end. The same holds true for the radiant heaters, microwaves, lasers, and other technologies now being used in industry to displace gas- and oil-fired heat.

The most important thing that policy-makers could do to accelerate this transformation would be to rationalize the market for electricity. Retail electricity prices are already regulated—badly. Rates are too low during peak hours of use and much too high during off-peak hours—that is, too high for most industrial and commercial users and too low for residential users. Proper pricing would sharply lower the cost of electricity used for heating, industrial processing, and the nighttime recharging of batteries for plug-in hybrids. If electricity were to cost less on average, we would use more of it, and it would inevitably displace more of the oil we burn.

Electricity is also much more expensive than it should be because environmentalists relentlessly oppose the construction and renovation of large power plants that operate on cheap fuels. State regulators control most such choices, and their divergent policies have created a wide national spread in price—under 5 cents per kilowatt-hour in states that have welcomed coal and nuclear energy (Kentucky, Kansas, Illinois, Virginia, Wyoming), 12 cents or more in such green-dominated states as New York, California, and Massachusetts. Federal regulators can help tip the balance toward the lower-cost states by promoting new investment in the interstate grid, thus facilitating trade in power.

Finally, we could flatten the tax structure for energy. States and localities typically impose what amounts to a 10-percent tax on the retail prices of both electricity and gasoline. Recalculated as de-facto taxes on the raw fuel used upstream, these rates are grossly disproportionate: about 20 percent (\$11 per barrel) for crude oil, 25 to 50 percent (\$20 per ton) for coal, and 1,000 percent (\$100 per pound) for unenriched uranium oxide. Competition would be promoted by repealing all current energy taxes and replacing them, on a revenue-neutral basis, with a flat, uniformly applied sales tax on raw fuels.

The electrical grid is the ultimate equalizer among competing sources of energy. Big stationary power plants can spin their turbine-generators with steam (produced by burning coal, gas, oil, wood, trash, or other combustibles), or they can replace their furnaces with uranium reactors, or they can replace steam with water or wind. Solar cells skip the turbine, transforming sun directly into electricity. Many environmentalists despise the grid because they despise the coal and uranium that generate 70 percent of our electricity. But renewable sources like wind and solar energy—which currently supply a negligible 0.03 BBO worth of ener-

gy—need the grid, too. It is the only way they will ever achieve any kind of competitive foothold in the battle to displace oil.

OIL DOES indeed pose a problem; the hawks are right about that. At current prices, the world is going to send some \$30 trillion to Persian Gulf states over the course of the next several decades, a terrifying amount of wealth to dispatch to feudal theocracies festering with hate. But because the oil economy is so huge, the problem cannot be solved by yet another round of hasty and heavy-handed prescriptions and ideologically driven subsidies from Washington. The energy bill just signed into

law by President Bush contains too much of both. We would do better to calm down, take realistic stock of an energy economy now bifurcated between oil and non-oil sources, and implement the quite modest tax and regulatory reforms that can help spur competition across the divide.

Luckily, whether or not we enact such reforms, technologies bridging the oil and electricity sectors are on their way. As costs fall and performance improves, they will be adopted quickly by industry and consumers alike. The process of convergence will be complex, and better policies can help it along. But the details are best left to the market, and to the intricacies of supply and demand.

OBSERVATIONS

Who Needs Ayn Rand?

Algis Valiunas

THIS YEAR marks the centenary of the birth of Ayn Rand, the philosopher and novelist. Although opinion is divided on whether the occasion merits observance, there can be no question that Rand continues to fire her readership with crusading ardor.

Twenty-two million copies of Rand's books have been sold; in 2002 alone, sales of her behemoth 1957 novel, *Atlas Shrugged*, reached 140,000 copies. According to a Library of Congress survey in 1991, *Atlas Shrugged* was, after the Bible, "the second most influential book in America today." Among public figures who claim to bear the mark of Rand's influence are Clarence Thomas, Oliver Stone, Cal Ripken, Jr., and Hillary Clinton. In his youth Alan Greenspan was an acolyte who contributed essays to her collections of Objectivist thought; Vladimir Putin's chief economic adviser is a big fan. There is an Ayn Rand Society within the American Philosophical Association, a *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies*, and an online

ALGIS VALIUNAS's recent contributions to COMMENTARY include "Love at the Multiplex" (May) and "Sartre vs. Camus" (January).

dating service for Rand admirers.

But Rand has also moved detractors, both liberal and conservative, to disgust or indifference. Gore Vidal, who knows from depravity, once deemed her philosophy "nearly perfect in its immorality." William F. Buckley, Jr. proposed the Sermon on the Mount as an antidote of choice to *Atlas Shrugged*, and Whittaker Chambers, in Buckley's *National Review*, wrote a definitive takedown of her ideas. On the television cartoon show *The Simpsons*, unfortunate young children are held captive in the Ayn Rand School for Tots, which is run like a B-movie penitentiary.

Rand continues to command attention as the heroine or villainess of a passionate libertarian strain in conservatism—although she disdained the label of conservative or libertarian. Instead, she insisted on being called an Objectivist, that is, one who knows that objective reality exists and who sees life as it really is. Whatever you might call her, there has never been a more vehement champion of rugged individualism, laissez-faire economics, the primacy of property rights, or the businessman as cultural hero. In her eyes, America as the founders con-

ceived it was the one moral society in the history of the world, and her appointed task was to save it and the world from the bane of collectivist, altruist, and subjectivist immorality.

AYN RAND was born Alice Rosenbaum in St. Petersburg, Russia. "I was *born* Jewish," she would later say. As one learns from *The Passion of Ayn Rand* (1986), an admiring but clear-eyed biography by her disciple Barbara Branden, her antipathy toward all forms of religion and her philosophical indifference to the accidents of family and ethnicity ensured that in her mind she did not remain Jewish.

The sort of child who does not play well with others, Alice inhabited a mental world of dreamy grandeur. At nine she read a story in a boys' adventure magazine about a dashing English soldier named Cyrus and decided, "This is what I want out of life." Three years later she was plastering her bedroom walls with photos of the liberal revolutionary Alexander Kerensky, and knew she could never love an ordinary man. The February 1917 Revolution, with Kerensky playing a leading role, enchanted and aroused her as

a magnificent struggle for freedom and individualism, an emotionally charged arena where titanic forces of good and evil stood toe to toe and saber in hand.

When, in due course, October's Bolshevik Revolution succeeded February's, the young revolutionary discovered how serious was the combat between freedom and tyranny. Her father's shop was nationalized—the look on his face ignited her hatred for a regime in which “the illiterate and the poor had to be the rulers of the earth *because* they were illiterate and poor”—and her family decamped to the Crimea to wait out the Revolution. There, Alice studied American history for two years and came to revere the United States as freedom's citadel. Her intellectual development was swift and decisive. She adored mathematics and logic, and at age fifteen she wrote in her diary: “Today, I decided to be an atheist.” Being anyone's inferior was unthinkable to her, so God could not possibly exist.

When the Rosenbaums returned to Petrograd in 1921, she entered the university, joining the anti-Communist camp. Life was generally gray and dank, and sometimes almost unendurable. Aching for the superb, she found in the opera house a refuge from the prevailing moral grime and physical squalor; she had a taste for Verdi, but a mad passion for the flounce and shimmer of operetta. For her this “tiddlywink music” would always embody the irrepressible joy of life.

It was an unexpected letter from emigrant relatives who had settled in Chicago that propelled her westward like destiny's guiding hand. Having inveigled an invitation to visit for six months, she embarked on English lessons, planning to write screenplays that would make her name and her fortune. In January 1926 she was off, with 50 dollars, a Remington-Rand typewriter, and a new name to go with her new country: Ayn Rosenbaum, soon to be further revised in the typewriter's honor.

Once in Chicago she banged out four screenplays, the choicest featuring a high-minded bandit who parachutes from skyscraper to skyscraper. Then she moved further west, to Hollywood, where a chance encounter with Cecil B. DeMille led to a job as a movie extra and a romance with the aspiring actor she would marry, a man she regarded as the epitome of masculine grace, beauty, and wisdom. She hustled in the time-honored immigrant fashion—as assistant script reader, file clerk, waitress—and after several years her scripts started to sell.

In 1933 she published her first novel, *We the Living*, about Bolshevik Russia, for which she received a measly advance and \$100 in royalties. Her next novel, *The Fountainhead*, about an architect of genius and preternatural integrity, appeared ten years later, after a dozen editors had rejected it. By 1948 it had sold over 400,000 copies. Rand demanded \$50,000 for the movie rights—over \$600,000 in today's money—and got her asking price. *Atlas Shrugged*, her 1957 novel about a strike by the indispensable brain workers who really make the world run, was another and even bigger blockbuster.

HAVING REALIZED her ambition as a novelist, Rand turned to philosophical essays detailing her Objectivist philosophy. These, too, sold phenomenally well. Her educational foundation, the Ayn Rand Institute, helped spread the word, as did her weekly column in the *Los Angeles Times* explaining the news from an Objectivist standpoint. Spillover crowds listened to her on the lecture circuit. Johnny Carson had her on the *Tonight* show.

She met her public in a black cape and a dress emblazoned with a gold dollar sign—the talisman of her striking capitalists. But she never went on strike herself. Work consumed her, and celebrity nourished her. Possessed of a philosopher's stone uniquely hers, she turned philosophy itself into gold. When she

died in 1982, a six-foot dollar sign kept vigil beside her casket.

The memorial sounds crass, but Rand was no sell-out: her philosophical integrity never warped or cracked, she said exactly what she thought, and she was right when she insisted that her course as a thinker remained essentially unchanged from the time she was eighteen. Her girlish daydreams of high glory and erotic rhapsody, her confinement in the Soviet nightmare, her discovery of America: all conjoined in her “concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute.”

RAND NEVER tired of expounding these ideas, which found their most complete and most admired expression in her fiction. Thus, in *The Fountainhead*, the god-like Howard Roark negotiates a world run by “second-handers” precisely by refusing to negotiate with them. A brilliant architecture student who has been thrown out of college for declaring that his teachers have nothing to teach him, Roark pursues his career, or rather his vocation, in New York, determined to design buildings like no others.

This vaulting ambition earns him the scorn, derision, condescension, or hatred of nearly everyone, especially those who recognize his genius. We meet Peter Keating, a rival architect who lives solely for his own reflection in other people's eyes; Ellsworth M. Toohey, architecture critic, socialist apostle, and grand master of skullduggery, who hates Roark's perfectionism for requiring more of ordinary humanity than it can readily deliver; and Gail Wynand, baron of the tabloid press, who sees through every virtue and is out to prove there is no such thing as a superior man but eventually finds himself loving, esteeming, and fearing Roark.

And then there is Dominique Francon, journalist and daughter of a prominent architect, wealthy, cyn-

ical, forbiddingly luscious, and fiercely virginal until Roark possesses her in what can only be called a consensual rape. Dominique loves Roark and he loves her, but she also hates him for smashing her shell of smug irony and forcing her to acknowledge that moral splendor is possible. So she tries to work his professional and personal destruction, conspiring with Ellsworth Toohey and marrying first Peter Keating and then Gail Wynand as vengeance on all concerned, including herself.

In the end, justice, true love, and architectural innovation prevail. Roark, on trial for blowing up a housing project he designed but bureaucrats had defiled with their alterations, makes so fine a speech in defense of his creation's inviolable truth that the jury acquits him. Dominique leaves a now-admirable Wynand and takes up with Roark, for keeps. Roark gets the skyscraper commission from Wynand that will make both their names ring down the centuries. "Then there was only the ocean and the sky and the figure of Howard Roark."

AS MIGHTY a figure as Roark cuts, he gives up an inch or two of height and ten pounds of muscle to John Galt, the philosopher-inventor-businessman who is the protagonist of *Atlas Shrugged* and surely the most spectacularly outsized hero in modern literature. In the novel, the catchphrase of the day is "Who is John Galt?" Nobody seems to know the answer, or how the phrase has caught on, and not until some 600 pages into this 1,100-page work does the reader find out. But the heroine is on the track almost from the start, without knowing it, and without knowing that all along John Galt has been tracking *her*.

She is Dagny Taggart, the brains of the Taggart Transcontinental Railroad; the president of the operation, her brother Jim, is resentful of her competence and his improvidence is running the company into the ground. Competence and achieve-

ment versus improvidence and parasitism—the virtues are the trademarks of pure capitalism, the vices those of government regulation, the merest grain of which will wreck a perfect economic machine. In *Atlas Shrugged*, the complicity of unworthy captains of industry with government despoilers is pushing the long-entrenched New Deal inexorably into a form of virtual Stalinism, and all but shutting down the world economy.

John Galt has been deliberately hastening that shutdown, in order to bring on the resurrection of laissez-faire economics. He has invented a motor that converts static electricity from the air into kinetic energy. When the company he has been working for falls into the hands of Marxist imbeciles, he forms an enclave of disillusioned men of genius and talent in a Rocky Mountain valley hidden from common sight by his techno-wizardry. From there he leads a strike of the individuals whose competence and enterprise allow the world to keep running; the masses, beguiled by intellectuals, cannot recognize such men as the benefactors they really are, and Galt is bent on making the truth break forth.

Dagny Taggart is one of Galt's blue-chip recruits; his drawing her into the fold is the novel's principal line of action, around which several sharp-cornered intrigues are gathered. As always in Rand, free markets and true hearts, economic and erotic bliss, are intertwined. Like Dominique Francon, Dagny is a masterful beauty who longs to be mastered. She is, first by Francisco d'Anconia, the love of her youth and the owner of the world's largest copper mining company, and Hank Rearden, inventor of an alloy stronger and lighter than steel. But when she meets Galt, she knows this is the man she has waited for all her life. Although d'Anconia and Rearden still love her, they recognize Galt's unique claim: in Rand, the best men just are that way—heroically reasonable about love as about everything else.

Reason may be cruel at times, but

it is always effective. The strikers' grand scheme works, the world becomes chaos, and they return in their generous selfishness to create it anew. In the novel's last sentence, Galt silently performs a godlike action: "He raised his hand and over the desolate earth he traced in space the sign of the dollar."

CLEARLY, THESE are novels with a program—ethical, economic, political, metaphysical. Above all, they are celebrations of mind. Rand is a sort of brassy minor poet of intellectual achievement, and of human ratiocination as the supreme moral force in the universe. In her fiction, the highest intelligence shapes character of comparable excellence; her heroes invariably possess extraordinary mental energy stoked by patient devotion, determination never broken by protracted hardship or witless neglect, certainty that they can make a lasting contribution of the utmost significance.

This depiction of extraordinary brainpower, vitality, integrity, and fortitude can be bracing, even exhilarating, if one is willing to dispense with any resemblance to real life for a time. You can soar through the two blockbuster novels powered by turbojets of fantasy, transported to heights where most serious modern fiction would never think of going. In that sense, *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* are not so much novels as very long fables, romances promoting a new chivalric order.

Rand loves the aspects of modernity that the prevalent strain in American fiction ignores or loathes. In her veneration of the philosopher-businessman, she cuts against the business-hating grain of the American novel. It is only her villains—Peter Keating, James Taggart—who resemble the grasping, morally hollow vulgarians and pashas of Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, and Frank Norris. But in her work they are also merely the foils for moral titans like Galt, Rearden, Dagny Taggart, and the regenerated Gail Wynand.

These great figures are meant to inspire readers to go out and do likewise. When an unnamed young man with sublime but indefinite longings sees a summer resort designed by Howard Roark, he feels a strength that will sustain him in his ambition to realize his vision, whatever that may be: "Don't work for my happiness, my brothers—show me yours—show me that it is possible—show me your achievement—and the knowledge will give me the courage for mine." Rand wants to send tremors of possibility through her readership; her fiction combines the hectic rapture of the self-help book as we know it today with the sober regard for unremitting middle-class effort that Samuel Smiles extolled in the original *Self-Help* (1859).

RAND'S STATED purpose in her writing is "*the projection of an ideal man.*" Distinctively modern experiences that most of us take for granted—feeling the rush of wind at the top of a skyscraper, seeing the landscape flow past from a speeding train—Rand's best and brightest appreciate as the most exquisite refinements for sensual aristocrats. And the most sensual are those who esteem the power of abstract thought to create a uniquely human world appropriate to the age of capitalist democracy.

What is one to make of it all? In Rand, soundness and charlatanry commingle. In the end, charlatanry prevails.

Freedom, individuality, achievement, reason: Rand takes these and other fine ideas and pursues them to the limits of sanity. Rightly understanding Soviet Communism (and German National Socialism, which she considered its mad collectivist kin) as epitomizing the worst in ethical and political thought, she plunges to the conclusion that in its polar opposite will be found nothing less than perfection. Having learned the lessons of socialist dystopia on her own body, she embraces a utopian fantasy of her own:

only mingy compromise with collectivism stands in the way of the society without flaw, in which heroic individuals, loosed from Judeo-Christian tyranny with its insufferable God and foul altruism, will create the capitalist paradise.

In her passion to reshape the world in accordance with her idea, Rand begins to sound like the tyrants she hates. Her capitalist revolutionaries speak of their opponents as "subhuman creatures," "looting lice." Galt's radio address to the nation—he has commandeered the airwaves by some electronic magic—is positively Castro-like in its mad zealotry, running to over 50 pages and unfolding every half-truth and alluring lunacy Rand ever entertained.

Everything in Rand's thought depends on her faith in reason, her conviction that any question has a clear and definitive answer. This unlimited faith in reason damages her as a novelist—there are no mysteries in her world, including no mysteries of human character—and also severely limited her as a moralist and undid her as a woman.

In Rand's psychology, reason unfailingly determines emotion, never the other way around. But in her own erotic life Rand was at the mercy of a turbulent unreason that pulled her under even as she bumbled on about her unimpeachable rationality. As she could only love an extraordinary man, she endowed the man she married, Frank O'Connor, with all the qualities of a hero, even of a god. In fact, in almost everyone's eyes but hers, O'Connor, a failure as a movie actor, was a raging mediocrity.

At the age of forty-nine, Rand fell for yet another god, Nathaniel Branden, the husband of her biographer and himself a disciple younger than she by 25 years. She expounded the perfect reasonableness of their adultery to each of the injured spouses, whom she expected reasonably to accept their twice-weekly scheduled trysts in the bedroom she shared with her husband. After years of this, the

Brandens' marriage collapsed and Rand's husband swirled down the alcoholic drain.

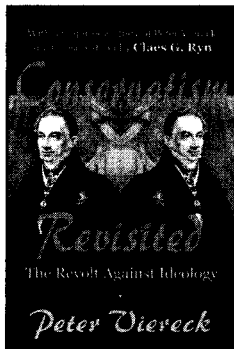
When Rand was sixty-one and Branden thirty-six, the sexual fire went out for him and he found a younger lover. Rand nearly went insane in her jealousy. Maintaining that she was entirely reasonable and right, and Branden purely evil, she destroyed his professional reputation and banished him from the Randian kingdom where he had been until then the crown prince. Heroic reason, heroic freedom, heroic love ended, as they began, in folly.

IMAGINING HERSELF one up on Heraclitus, Rand the thinker holds that a man's mind is his character is his fate. She appears never to have given a thought to how one actually comes by one's particular mind and character. She has no sense of human beings as creatures, each endowed with his own particular gifts, whether by chance or design, lacking other qualities he may wish he had, and subject to all the pains of individual and human nature. It is arguable that only from this awareness of incompleteness and contingency does there stem compassion for others, a quality rooted in rational human nature that has achieved its fullest expression in democratic society. But compassion disgusts Rand; John Galt scorns it as love of the unworthy, a triumph of sloppy feeling over lucid reason.

This is no doubt why, for all her continued popularity, Rand is anything but a commanding figure these days. Very few conservatives want any part of her, for she is the conservative bogeyman that liberals invoke to terrify their children: money-worshipping, absorbed in the pursuit of her own happiness, indifferent to the pain of others. Though she will no doubt continue to sell—there are certain effects she brings off as well as anyone, and they have their undeniable appeal—it is hardly a matter for regret that her centenary has gone largely unmarked.

Peter Viereck

Pulitzer-prize Winning Poet, Critic, and Historian



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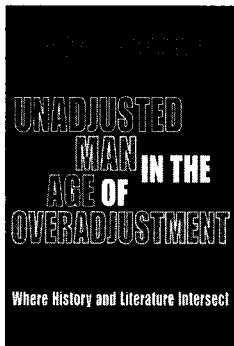
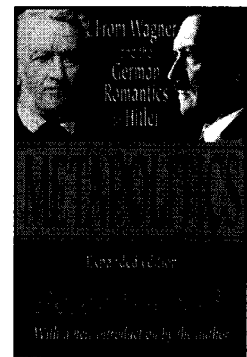
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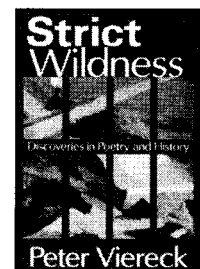
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MUSIC

Homage to Bix

Terry Teachout

BORN TWO years and half a continent apart, Bix Beiderbecke and Louis Armstrong, the two most influential figures in the early history of jazz, emerged as major soloists on the same instrument (cornet) at the same time (early 1924). They were viewed with awe by their contemporaries, and their contrasting styles evolved over time into the twin lines of descent from which most of today's jazz can be traced. In addition, they knew, liked, and admired each other: Armstrong dedicated his first book, *Swing That Music*, to Beiderbecke, describing him on a later occasion as a "born genius," and Beiderbecke is widely reported to have felt more or less the same way about his older colleague.

Yet musicologists, while recognizing and acknowledging Beiderbecke's enduring significance, have nonetheless been strangely reluctant to treat him in the same way they

treat Armstrong. Significantly, there is almost no monographic literature on Beiderbecke—none, that is, by academic scholars—and he goes entirely unmentioned in the key article on jazz in the second edition of the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. To be sure, he has been written about extensively, but for the most part by amateurs, journalistic critics, and working musicians. The latest book to be published about his life, Jean Pierre Lion's *Bix: The Definitive Biography of a Jazz Legend*, is the work of a French businessman who describes himself on the dust jacket as "a literature and music collector" and who appears to have had no musical training whatsoever.¹

The most obvious reason for this difference in treatment is that Beiderbecke is white and Armstrong black. In the politically charged creation myth that still dominates much of the received thinking about jazz, it is taken for granted that black jazz is more "authentic" than white jazz and that all white jazz musicians are by definition derivative. But, unfortunately for those who seek to put together the puzzles of history according to the rules

of politics, there are always pieces left over at the end. In jazz, the first and biggest of these pieces is Beiderbecke—born into a middle-class Iowa family, initially exposed to jazz through the early recordings of the all-white Original Dixieland Jazz Band, and propelled to fame as a soloist in the all-white orchestra of Paul Whiteman, where he played in a self-taught style whose unlikely source was the harmonic language of Debussy and Ravel.

The difficulty is only deepened by the fact that, almost without exception, black musicians of the 1920's and 30's were as quick as their white colleagues to acclaim Beiderbecke as a major innovator. "All of a sudden, comes this white boy from out west, playin' stuff all his own," the black cornet player Rex Stewart would recall years later. "Didn't sound like Louis [Armstrong] or anybody else. But just so pretty. And that *tone* he got. Knocked us all out." The great black bandleader Fletcher Henderson even went so far as to record in 1931 a "cover version" of "Singin' the Blues" on which Stewart, who later became

TERRY TEACHOUT, COMMENTARY's regular music critic and the drama critic of the Wall Street Journal, also writes about the arts at www.terryteachout.com. A member of the National Council on the Arts, he is at work on a biography of Louis Armstrong.

¹ Continuum, 348 pp., \$26.95.

one of Duke Ellington's best-known soloists, plays a note-for-note interpretation of Beiderbecke's solo from his celebrated 1927 recording of the same song.²

But racial politics is not the only reason why scholars have paid more attention to Armstrong than to Beiderbecke. Not only was Louis Armstrong a great musician, but he was also a gifted writer of prose who had a passion for self-revelation. In two published memoirs, dozens of magazine and newspaper articles, and hundreds of letters and other autobiographical documents, he gave free rein to his outgoing personality. Beiderbecke, by contrast, was a shy, comparatively inarticulate man whose 44 surviving letters are for the most part unrevealing, and his friends and colleagues all claimed to find him hard to know on anything beyond a purely casual basis.

Their puzzlement was understandable enough. An alcoholic who drank himself to death at the age of twenty-eight, Beiderbecke shunned close personal relations of any kind: in the words of the cornetist Jimmy McPartland, "Bix was a mystery to us. We all knew him, admired him, thought he was a great guy. But, in a way, we didn't know him at all." His letters suggest a man of no more than average intelligence, and he appears to have had no serious extramusical interests at all (though friends testified to his enthusiasm for the novels of P.G. Wodehouse).³ Though his musical gifts were prodigious, he resisted all attempts at formal instruction, and even as an adult he found it vexingly difficult to read and write music.

SMALL WONDER that a figure so inexplicable—and one who left behind so little documentary evidence of his personality—should have held so little attraction for academic scholars, whose penchant for reductive "explanations" of the lives of creative artists is notorious. Perhaps, then, it is a paradoxical stroke of good fortune that a French busi-

nessman rather than an American musicologist has attempted to write the "definitive biography" of Bix Beiderbecke.

Needless to say, *Bix* is something less than definitive—and not merely because Lion lacks the musical knowledge that might have made it possible for him to comment other than superficially on Beiderbecke's style. Besides that deficiency, *Bix* is marred by its author's uncritical acceptance of the race-based thinking of certain of his American colleagues. (It is, for instance, absurd to say that Beiderbecke "comforted Americans with the idea that an original white jazz was possible, alongside the music of black musicians.")

Nevertheless, considered solely as a narrative biography, *Bix* is an exemplary piece of work. Building on the pioneering research of Richard M. Sudhalter and Philip R. Evans, the co-authors of *Bix: Man & Legend* (1974), Lion has made extensive use of important documentary material discovered after Sudhalter and Evans wrote their book. In so doing, he has exploded numerous myths that long ago crept into the Beiderbecke literature, replacing them with a factually trustworthy account of the cornetist's life.

What Lion cannot explain is the compulsion that led Beiderbecke to continue drinking long after he knew that it would kill him. Nor is he capable of shedding any light on the sources of Beiderbecke's genius, since genius can never be explained, only described. But his *Bix* does more than any previous book to describe the circumstances of its subject's enigmatic life, and in the process brings us as close to understanding him as we are likely to come.

THE BASIC facts of Beiderbecke's life and work are known to all jazz scholars. Born Leon Bismark Beiderbecke in 1903 ("Bix" was a childhood nickname that stuck), he was the youngest son of a conservative businessman from Davenport, Iowa. A prodigy who began playing piano at the age

of five, he first heard the Original Dixieland Jazz Band on record early in 1919, wheedled a used cornet from a neighbor, and quickly taught himself how to play what he was hearing. Within a matter of months, he was performing jazz in public on both cornet and piano, and by 1920, when he heard Louis Armstrong on a New Orleans excursion boat that touched briefly at Davenport, he had shrugged off all his other interests to concentrate on music.

By 1922 Beiderbecke was playing professionally, and in 1924 he made his first recordings with the Wolverine Orchestra, a jazz combo that played in a pepped-up version of the classic New Orleans style. Two years later he joined the dance band of Jean Goldkette, and in 1927 he became a member of the brass section of Paul Whiteman's orchestra, then the best-known instrumental ensemble in popular music. At that point his small-group recordings, most of them made in collaboration with the like-minded saxophonist Frank Trumbauer, had already made him legendary within the tight-knit community of jazz musicians, and his appearances with Whiteman brought him to the attention of a still wider audience.

BEIDERBECKE'S STYLE, which was all but fully formed when he made his first recordings, was completely different from that of the New Orleans-born cornet and trumpet

² Beiderbecke's recording of "Singin' the Blues" is included on *Bix Beiderbecke: The Quintessence, 1924-1930* (Fremaux & Associés FA 215, two CD's), an imported 36-track anthology available from amazon.com that contains all but a few of his key recordings. The Henderson version has been reissued on *Tidal Wave: The Original Decca Recordings* (Decca Jazz/GRP GRD-643).

³ The jazz guitarist Eddie Condon claimed to have had a conversation with Beiderbecke in 1925 in which the cornetist described Marcel Proust as "a French writer who lived in a cork-lined room. His stuff is no good in translation." Alas, Condon was a notorious embroiderer whose anecdotes can rarely be taken at face value.

players who preceded him, Armstrong included. Unlike them, he played with precise, at times almost fussy articulation and a rounded, chime-like tone whose sound Eddie Condon famously likened to “a girl saying yes,” sticking mostly to the middle register and avoiding the interpolated high notes that became an Armstrong trademark. His improvised solos had an architectural balance similar to Armstrong’s, but they were more subdued in their emotional impact. Instead of making them pivot on the flattened “blue” thirds and sevenths favored by most black musicians of the day, Beiderbecke preferred to incorporate unexpected “color” tones extracted from the same upper-interval chords used by the modern European composers whose music he knew and loved.⁴

Beiderbecke’s “cool” lyricism was seen by his contemporaries as an alternative to Armstrong’s “hot,” extroverted virtuosity. He and Trumbauer would wield great influence on musicians of similarly lyrical inclination, including the white trumpeters Bunny Berigan and Bobby Hackett and such noted black players as Rex Stewart and the tenor saxophonist Lester Young. But working with the Whiteman band had also introduced Beiderbecke to a wider range of musical possibilities—among other things, he played on the first recording of George Gershwin’s *Concerto in F*—and he was becoming increasingly preoccupied with composition at the time of his death in 1931.

To what extent his lack of musical training might have interfered with his progress as a composer cannot be known. In any case, the question was made moot by his drinking, which by 1929 had become so uncontrolled that an incapacitating attack of *delirium tremens* forced him to withdraw from the Whiteman band and return to Davenport. His parents sent him to a sanitarium, where he told the doctors that he had been drinking three pints of whiskey a day for the

past three years. Soon after his release, he began drinking again; although he resumed his musical career briefly, his rapid physical deterioration kept him from returning to the Whiteman band, whose rigorous touring schedule he feared. Instead, he moved back to New York, where he died of a severe case of lobar pneumonia.

WHY DID Bix Beiderbecke destroy himself with alcohol? Contrary to still-popular belief, he does not seem to have become a drunk out of frustration with the alleged musical commercialism of the Whiteman band. Not only was he drinking to excess long before that, but he saw his work with Whiteman’s musically advanced ensemble as the high-water mark of his career to date.⁵

While there are no easy explanations of a complex psychological phenomenon like alcoholism, enough is now known about Beiderbecke’s life to make more informed speculation possible. In 1921, for instance, when he was seventeen, his parents sent him off to Lake Forest Academy, a Chicago-area boarding school. It was long taken for granted that they did so in the hope of forcing him to attend to his non-musical studies, but Jean Pierre Lion has now confirmed a persistent rumor that he had been arrested by Davenport police on a morals charge. Although the case never went to trial, surviving documents prove that Beiderbecke molested a five-year-old girl whose father claimed in an affidavit that “[s]he said he asked [her] to show herself.”

It was four months later, probably in an informal deal with the authorities, that he left Davenport for Lake Forest, a quasi-military prep school intended for well-to-do boys with “learning difficulties.” Lion believes that Beiderbecke was tortured by lifelong guilt over this episode (which, so far as is known, was never repeated). Whatever the specifics, there can be little doubt that he was deeply ashamed of his arrest, which

the Beiderbecke family covered up for eight decades.

Shame of this nature might well help to explain Beiderbecke’s alcoholism, and certainly appears to explain his longstanding problems with intimacy. Aside from a habitual unwillingness to be emotionally forthcoming with his friends, he is known to have had only two physical relationships with other adults, one of them a woman and the other a man. The latter was not disclosed until 1974, and given the stigma attaching to homosexuality during Beiderbecke’s lifetime, this, too, may have been more than his Iowa upbringing had prepared him to accept.

Evidence compiled by Lion also disproves another widespread myth about Beiderbecke, which is that his middle-class parents disapproved of jazz so violently that they disowned him when he began to play professionally. In truth, they were proud of his success, especially after he joined the much-admired Whiteman band.⁶ What worried them—with good reason—was that their undisciplined, emotionally troubled son would be unequal to the rigors of life in the music business, as indeed he was.

At any rate, Beiderbecke’s downward spiral into uncontrollable alcoholism is amply documented in the pages of *Bix*, and the story is a pitiable one. The more he drank, the less confidence he had in his ability to play well, and so he drank still more to overcome his growing fear. “As a result,” his friend Bing Crosby would recall, “he generally

⁴ This preference was even more pronounced in Beiderbecke’s piano playing, documented in a 1927 recording of his own “In a Mist” and the three later piano miniatures, “Candlelights,” “In the Dark,” and “Flashes,” that were transcribed from his playing by Bill Challis.

⁵ See my “King of the Jazz Age” (COMMENTARY, March 2005) for a discussion of commonly held misconceptions about the Whiteman band.

⁶ During his two years with Whiteman, Beiderbecke is thought to have earned about \$25,000, the equivalent of \$270,000 today. (The inflation-corrected figure of \$600,000 cited by Lion is incorrect.)

felt pretty rough, so much so that if anybody asked him, 'How do you feel?' he answered, 'I don't ask you how you feel. Why do you ask me how I feel? You know I feel bad. Just leave me alone.'

In time, Beiderbecke's physical collapse left him with nothing but his fear. The trombonist Jack Teagarden, who played on his last recording session in 1930, told this terrible tale:

I noticed Bix was sitting toward the back of the studio, against a dark covered drape. He was seated on a stool, and as I looked at him, I could see him repeatedly pushing the valves of his horn. I swear he was talking to the cornet, saying things like, "Don't let me down."

Eleven months later, he was dead.

ONE UNDERSTANDABLY prefers to think of Beiderbecke as Louis Arm-

strong remembered him late in life. "The first time I heard Bix," he recalled, "I said these words to myself: there's a man as serious about his music as I am." This tribute from one great artist to another cuts all the way through legend to the irreducible core of fact. Pitiful as a personality, unknowable as a man, Beiderbecke was for a brief time capable of playing jazz with such individuality that his only true peer knew his worth on the spot.

That this recognition should not yet be adequately reflected in the writings of jazz historians is at once unforgivable and understandable. Beiderbecke's originality was of a kind few critics can grasp. One who does, the British writer Max Harrison, has called him "the most radical of the great jazz soloists of the 1920's." Yet his radicalism has never prevented ordinary listeners from responding, intensely and personally, to Beiderbecke's music, just as his

contemporaries, mystifying though they found him, unhesitatingly acknowledged his genius. This miraculous ability to leap across the barrier of imperfect comprehension is part of what genius is all about.

It is inexpressibly sad to know that Beiderbecke himself, early or late, had no such confidence in the value of his gifts. "I'm only a musical degenerate," he told a fellow musician at the height of his fame. Three years later he wrote to Frank Trumbauer, "I guess I'm just a minus quality." How one wishes he could have known that all of his records would still be in print three-quarters of a century after his death, and that a generation of young listeners would be hearing in them what the trumpeter Max Kaminsky heard when they were brand-new: "Bix's tone was so pure, so devoid of any tinge of sentimentality or personal ego, that it was the nearest thing to perfect beauty I have ever heard."

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Books in Review

Numbers Racket

Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism

by Robert A. Pape

Random House. 352 pages. \$25.95

Reviewed by
Jonathan Kay

FROM THE end of World War II until 1980, the world did not witness a single successful act of suicide terrorism. Since then, the global rate of such attacks has risen from an average of three a year in the 1980's to about one a month in the 1990's to almost one a week from 2001 to 2003. In Iraq, suicide car bombings are now so common that they often fail to make the front pages of Western newspapers. Though self-preservation is the most basic instinct known to man, Islamic holy warriors have somehow managed to turn suicide terrorism into something horribly banal. How did this happen?

JONATHAN KAY is a managing editor of *Canada's National Post*.

Since 9/11, that question has produced two broad answers: "it's them" and "it's us." The "it's them" camp focuses on the jihadists' cult of martyrdom, their unquenchable hatred of the West and its freedoms, their extreme interpretation of Islam, and even the violent tendencies that seem to inhere in the Muslim faith itself. The "it's us" camp responds with a pro-forma denunciation of the terrorists' methods but follows by emphasizing all the ways that Western nations have antagonized the Muslim world and invited such an "extreme strategy" in response. Robert A. Pape, a political scientist at the University of Chicago, has written the most intellectually ambitious effort yet to advance this latter thesis.

PAPE HAS compiled a database of every suicide attack committed between 1980 and 2003 and has broken it down into categories. According to his analysis, eighteen distinct campaigns are responsible for all but fourteen of the 315 suicide attacks he has catalogued, and each campaign has had a similar objective: to compel a state to withdraw its forces from a particular piece of occupied territory.

Pape distinguishes in several ways

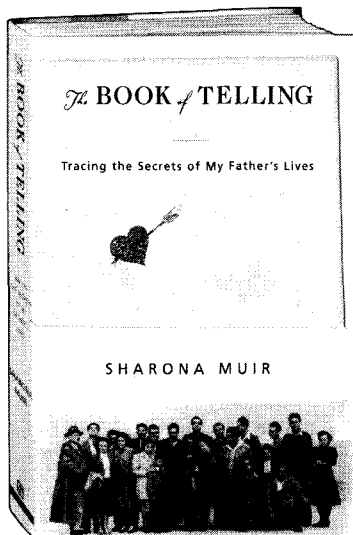
between suicide attacks and "regular" terrorism. While previous groups like the Basque ETA, the Irish Republican Army, and the 1970's-era PLO sometimes took pains to limit the number of their victims, suicide attackers always aspire to murder on a grand scale. Their goal is not to gain sympathy or publicity for their cause but to punish their enemies in the most brutal manner possible, even at the cost of alienating potential supporters. Because they do not bother with timing devices, remote controls, getaway plans, and other complicating details, they are able to inflict more damage, killing 21 people on average as opposed to one victim for the typical non-suicide assault.

Moreover, suicide attacks are almost always directed against democracies. Not only are democratic regimes more restrained in fighting back than their authoritarian counterparts, they have a lower threshold of tolerance for civilian casualties. Indeed, suicide terrorism is on the rise, Pape believes, because terrorists have learned that it works. In at least seven of the eighteen campaigns he profiles, the tactic won concessions of one kind or another.

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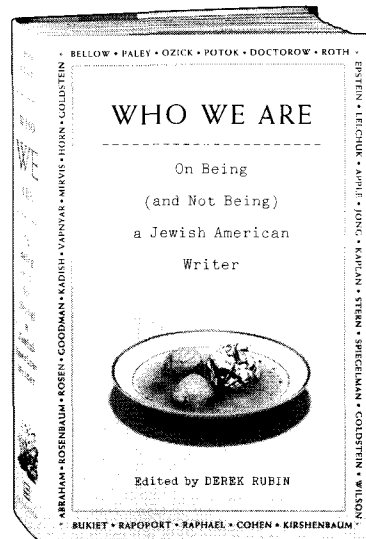
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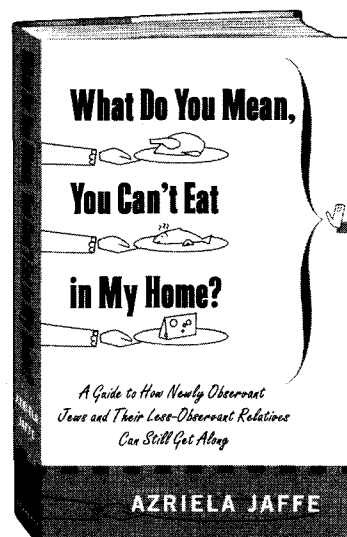
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A BOY'S OWN STORY



His clearest example is Hizballah's campaign against U.S. and French forces in Lebanon in 1983, which resulted in the removal of both nations' troops. In Sri Lanka, although the suicide-bombing campaign of the Tamil Tigers in the 1980's and 90's did not yield them an independent homeland, it did force the Sri Lankan government to the negotiating table, and later helped win a measure of autonomy for Tamil areas.

The "taproot" of suicide terrorism, Pape suggests, is nationalism—or, more precisely, the belief among members of a distinct ethnic, linguistic, or historical community that they "are entitled to govern their national homeland without interference from foreigners." To support this claim, Pape provides numerous excerpts from speeches, manifestos, interviews, videos, and other documents. To illustrate the true motivation behind al Qaeda, for instance, he cites a May 1998 statement in which Osama bin Laden declares, "The call to wage war against America was made because America has spearheaded the crusade against [Saudi Arabia] over and above its meddling in its affairs and its politics, and its support of the oppressive, corrupt, and tyrannical regime that is in control."

Religion is not entirely irrelevant to suicide terrorism, in Pape's view, but what matters most is not the particular faith but whether it happens to differ from that of the occupier. Conflict that crosses a religious divide, he writes, "makes demonization, and therefore killing, of enemy civilians easier" and makes it possible to redeem "suicides that would otherwise be taboo." As Pape emphasizes, such ideas are not unique to Islam. His database includes groups that adhere to several different creeds, all of which embrace some version of martyrdom.

Indeed, Pape tries to prove mathematically that there is no special connection between Islam and terrorism. In one statistical analysis, he divides 66 known al-Qaeda suicide

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terrorists into groups based on national origin. Comparing these nation-by-nation tallies with the total number of Muslims in each country who are known to be influenced by Salafism—the fundamentalist creed embraced by al Qaeda and other Sunni Islamist terrorist groups—he finds no significant statistical relationship between the two.

In a second analysis, Pape groups the terrorists according to whether or not their country of origin has experienced the presence of American combat troops. Here he finds a correlation: the deployment of American soldiers is strongly associated with a country's tendency to produce al-Qaeda suicide bombers. Based on these results, Pape reasons that "the stationing of tens of thousands of American combat troops on the Arabian peninsula from 1990 to 2001 most likely made al-Qaeda suicide attacks against Americans, including the atrocities committed on September 11, 2001, from ten to twenty times more likely."

SINCE ITS release, *Dying to Win* has received a great deal of attention in the media. Many opponents of the war in Iraq have seized on the book as confirmation that removing Saddam Hussein and occupying his country have made the world more dangerous for the U.S. Pape himself has summarized his arguments in a lengthy *New York Times* op-ed, and has been profiled favorably in the *Washington Post*. Throughout, he has been portrayed as a dispassionate scholar trying to use rigorous, scientific analysis to get to the truth behind suicide terrorism. He is, however, anything but that.

Consider Pape's catalog of suicide-terrorist campaigns. All but two of them, one immediately notices, are the work of Muslims. And one of the exceptions—by a Sikh separatist group—involved just a single successful attack. Pape's thesis of a non-sectarian basis for suicide terrorism thus hangs on a lone remaining example: the on-again,

off-again efforts of the Hindu Tamil Tigers. Yet even this is problematic, since the Tigers' war effort has depended in large part on child-soldiers abducted from their families and forcibly brainwashed—a cult-like recruitment tactic that even the jihadists have eschewed.

No less problematic is Pape's claim that al Qaeda is just another group seeking "national liberation." Though bin Laden has indeed pointed to the presence of "infidel" troops in Saudi Arabia as a pretext for declaring war on the U.S., American combat forces were removed following the fall of Saddam—with no discernible effect on al-Qaeda violence. Far more prominent in the group's rhetoric, of course, is its Islamist agenda: its intention to prosecute a worldwide jihad in hopes of bringing down the whole of Western society and building an Islamic caliphate on its ashes.

His thesis is even less consistent

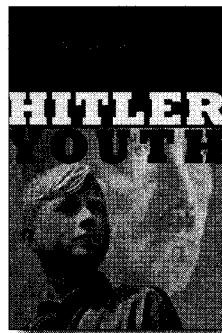
with the ongoing carnage in Iraq, where jihadists and former Baathists have now switched from targeting coalition troops to attacking Iraqis, in particular the politicians, soldiers, and police seeking to create a democratic, self-governing state that no longer requires propping up by the U.S. military. Only through a thoroughly tortured logic can such a nihilistic campaign of Muslim-on-Muslim murder be ascribed to "national liberation."

As for Pape's effort to prove his thesis mathematically, it in fact proves nothing. Like all statistical results, his are only as reliable as the assumptions built into the underlying model. In this case, as any informed observer of the Middle East would know, the assumptions are not credible.

In a nutshell, Pape starts with the premise that all "Salafist-influenced" citizens in Sunni nations

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should exhibit an equal chance of becoming suicide bombers. Since Saudi Arabia accounts for 52 percent of the 66 al-Qaeda terrorists under study, but only 8 percent of the total number of Salafists in Sunni nations, the discrepancy, Pape concludes, must be the result of the U.S. military presence in that country.

But Salafists cannot be treated as interchangeable data points, like so many fruit flies in a jar. For years, and in a manner unparalleled elsewhere in the Muslim world, Saudi Arabia's leaders have systematically indoctrinated their subjects with a sectarian and particularly virulent brand of militant Islam known as Wahhabism (a term sometimes used synonymously with Salafism). Until very recently, state-sponsored preachers openly espoused jihad, and the government paid hundreds of millions of dollars in protection money to al Qaeda. The practice of Christianity is a criminal offense there, and any deviation from the country's official sect is deemed heretical. Obviously, such a nation can be expected to produce far more terrorists per capita than a randomized model would predict.

To be sure, most suicide-terror campaigns, as Pape notes, are related in some way to a revolt against those perceived as an occupying force. That is hardly an original observation. Far more interesting, however, is the question of why adherents of a single religion seem systematically disposed toward expressing their grievances, territorial and otherwise, in the most indiscriminate and barbaric manner imaginable.

Pape does not answer this question, or even acknowledge its pertinence. But he does supply some clues. Suicide terrorism, he tells us, is indirectly fueled by religious rivalry, which enables the spread of paranoid rumors, facilitates demonization of the enemy, and allows terrorists to recast suicide murder as a form of martyrdom. All three of these elements have been charac-

teristic of many Islamic societies in history.

Even to a casual reader of core religious texts, it is striking how intensely Islam emphasizes the difference between the believer and the infidel. Because the Islamic empire spread so rapidly following its birth, it came to rule over many non-Muslim societies. From the 7th century onward, elaborate legal and social protocols were devised to emphasize the superiority of Islam in every encounter between Muslim and non-Muslim, as well as the duty of jihad whenever Islamic dominion is threatened.

This Manichean tendency endures, laying a psychological groundwork for Muslim extremists, even those whose explicit agenda may be secular or Marxist, to dehumanize their enemies and promote bizarre conspiracy theories. The same tendency has also created a powerful trans-national empathy among Muslims, which helps explain why Saudis and other Arabs are flocking to Iraq and why Pakistanis are exploding themselves in Afghanistan and other nations. (According to a recent poll, 79 percent of Pakistanis see themselves as "Muslim first," while only 7 percent see themselves as Pakistanis first.)

Few Muslims, even Wahhabists, find in their tradition any godly permission to engage in random slaughter. But all one needs is a few. And while most Muslims will not support such killing directly, too many have permitted themselves to overlook the gruesome tactics for the sake of maintaining intrafaith solidarity. This is especially true in the case of the Palestinian terrorist campaign against Jews, which has come to be regarded as an almost existential expression of Muslim suffering.

Despite Pape's best efforts, such thinking cannot be explained away as the misguided fury of national liberators. While terrorists may seize on Western actions as a means to justify their actions, there is simply too much evidence showing that

cultural forces deeply rooted in Islam are primarily responsible for the current suicide epidemic. To which one might add that, along with relentless pressure from the outside, cultural forces no less deeply rooted in Islam will have to be primarily responsible for stopping it.

In other words, it's not us, it's them.

Under the Skin

**Pornified:
How Pornography
Is Transforming Our Lives,
Our Relationships,
and Our Families**

by Pamela Paul

Times Books. 320 pp. \$25.00

Reviewed by
Kay S. Hymowitz

IF SIZE really matters, pornography now ranks as one of America's most prominent industries. Estimated to rake in as much as \$14 billion a year, it is the nation's most lucrative spectator sport, outperforming professional baseball, basketball, and football combined. As befits its success, porn (as it is familiarly known) has moved from the red-light district to the boardroom. It has its own lawyers, lobbyists, marketers, accountants, analysts, and trade publications. Hotel chains depend on it, the movie business grows fat on it, the Internet teems with it, and the universities give it high-brow respectability, with student magazines like Harvard's *H-Bomb* or Boston University's *Boink* and a growing cadre of professors of "porn studies."

In *Pornified*, the journalist Pamela

KAY S. HYMOWITZ writes frequently on social and cultural issues for COMMENTARY and is a contributing editor of the Manhattan Institute's City Journal.

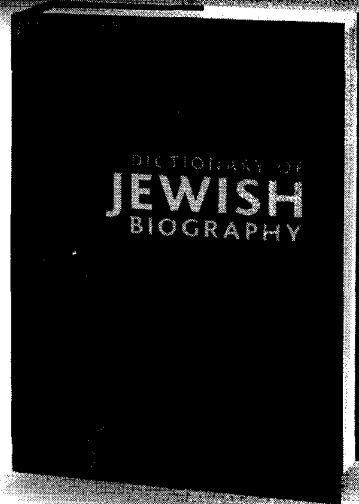
Paul forgoes most of what usually passes for serious discussion of pornography—its history, its relation to the free-speech debate, its implications for right-thinking feminists. Instead, through interviews, mostly with youngish heterosexual men, and her own privately commissioned polling, she tries to describe something more concrete: how our "pornified" culture has affected the everyday lives of actual Americans.

PORNOGRAPHY is nothing new, as anyone knows who has had the pleasure of examining the walls of Pompeii. What has changed in the U.S., Paul observes, is that images once relegated to the back of the newsstand now have been deemed ready for prime time. Pornography has become "seamlessly integrated into popular culture," suffusing not just cable TV (think of the antics of Samantha on *Sex and the City*) and fashion runways but such apple-pie institutions as the Super Bowl halftime show and the middlebrow bestseller list.

The mainstreaming of porn owes much to technology. In the early 1980's, the arrival of VCR's took the stag film out of the seedy "art theater" and placed it in front of the den recliner. By the middle of the decade, one in five videocassettes was "adult" material. But this was nothing compared with the 1990's, when the Internet made pornography as accessible as the nearest computer. Now, in Paul's telling, pornography is routine. Young men drive to work listening to the radio show of the raunchy Howard Stern, circulate spreadsheets to coworkers accompanied by pictures of the hardcore queen Jenna Jameson, and then go off for an evening of beer and lap dancing. Today's American male need never spend a moment apart from his dirty pictures.

All this is revolutionary enough. But according to Paul, the spread of porn has also meant defining deviancy down—way down. In the boogie nights of the 1970's and 80's,

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oral and anal sex were considered cutting-edge; today's aficionados consider such activities yawn-worthy. Pornography now involves sexual variations that make Hugh Hefner look maidenly—S&M, double penetration, "fisting," and a range of scatological tricks. It is also increasingly violent and nonconsensual, venturing into torture, mutilation, bestiality, and the exploitation of children.

So why are men—and Paul argues that the audience is overwhelmingly male—so attracted to pornography? She offers several answers. The first is what experts call "exemplification theory": that is, men (particularly in their teens) look to pornography for tips. A second, favored by porn fans themselves, is that "it's only natural" from an evolutionary point of view for men to crave sexual novelty. As one of Paul's twenty-five-year-old sub-

jects explains, it is like picking a flavor of ice cream. "I'll sit down at the computer and say, 'Hmm, I feel like Asian girls tonight.'" Some also argue that pornography gives feminized modern men a chance to exercise their inner Neanderthal. Still another theory has it that pornography offers men complication-free sex—no rejection, no demands, and no dissatisfied partners.

WHATEVER PORNOGRAPHY'S allure, many people believe that it is simple fantasy, offering much pleasure and threatening no harm. Paul disagrees. Pornography, she argues, distorts expectations, leading men to imagine "endless variety" and perfect female bodies as the Way Things Are Supposed To Be. It also encourages men to objectify their wives and girlfriends. "The women in pornography exist in order to please men," Paul writes, "and are

therefore willing to do anything." Finally, pornography desensitizes. As a thirty-one-year-old Texas surgeon tells her, "There are times when I've been so utterly bored while having sex with a woman, I'll think of porn to hasten things along."

As for women, some proudly embrace pornography as a way to claim "ownership" of their sexuality or as the "next stage of female liberation," but most find the whole business a turn-off. They complain of male partners who do not understand foreplay and who are keen on "porn moves" that come off as forced and artificial. Many see an interest in pornography as akin to cheating. They feel hurt by the hours their men spend with younger or more perfectly endowed women, even if the women are digitalized. As Paul sees it, porn simply poisons relationships.

Children, too, are citizens of pornified America. Every sort of product, from snowboards to underwear to computer games, is marketed to them with increasingly explicit sexual images and innuendo. As for Internet porn, determined teenagers have the freedom and know-how to gain easy access. On a recent tour for her best-selling memoir, even the supremely jaded Jenna Jameson was taken aback when thirteen-year-old girls came up to her to declare that she was their role model.

Instead of recognizing these dangers, Paul laments, Americans try to play it cool. "Supporting pornography," she writes, has become the "default" position not just of liberals and civil-libertarians but of Main Street too. The ACLU and the industry itself have successfully packaged pornography as an issue of free speech and open-mindedness, and people feel obliged to stammer apologies before saying an unkind word about it. This, Paul concludes, is a ridiculous state of affairs. Though pornography need not be criminalized, it should be described for what

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it is—not “hip and fun” but “harmful, pathetic, and decidedly unsexy.”

THE GREAT virtue of Pamela Paul's book is that it deals with pornography at the level of human experience, something all too rare in the conceptualizing galaxy of the usual commentators on the subject. While civil libertarians fret about censorship, feminists argue about whether “sex workers” are empowered businesswomen or victims of exploitation, and academics yammer on about porn's “transgressive” value, back on earth, Paul reminds us, there are more pressing issues, like how it feels to discover that your young son has been using the computer not for homework but for access to bigtits.com.

As Paul shows, pornography does not so much liberate desire as help to shape it into soul-denying, obsessively narcissistic forms. Thanks to its influence, the sexually outré has become the norm for many Americans. Paul's subjects frequently describe how pornography has taken up residence in their brains and reshaped their expectations. As one avid consumer tells her, “I find that I look more for women who have the attributes I see in porn. I want bigger breasts, blonder hair, curvier bodies.” A twenty-four-year-old woman reports that all of her boyfriends since college have asked to ejaculate in her face, a favorite pornographic trope.

Still, especially given its promise, *Pornified* disappoints. Paul's argument is repetitive, and her prose dreary, a result in part of her overreliance on polls and surveys. She might have saved herself the trouble. As she herself concedes, most of the mind-numbing numbers she transmits are unreliable. Too often, they are also implausible. At one point she cites a *Christianity Today* survey in which 40 percent of clergy supposedly confessed that they were patrons of Internet porn—a figure exceeding that for the general male population.

Paul is also too quick to assume a direct connection between exposure to pornography and corrupted behavior. In her scheme of things, men click on “Live Asian Sluts” and then expect to make their experience imitate it. But surely this oversimplifies things. The obsessive, three-hour-a-day user or the callow teen may indeed develop a distorted view of women and sex because of pornography, but is that necessarily the case for the occasional curious web surfer? Paul shows little interest in such distinctions.

Finally, *Pornified* fails to recognize that the mainstreaming of pornography is part of a larger cultural problem. To listen to Paul's subjects is to find the exhausted echoes of a revolution that has pronounced just about any desire worthy of cultivation and divested sex of much of its larger human meaning. Pornography, we have been told for decades now, encourages people to break free of fussy bourgeois convention; it releases pent-up desires, expands imaginative possibilities. By now, the litany is as tiresome to hear as it must be to live with, especially if one happens to be a woman.

Indeed, among the saddest insights of *Pornified* is how defensive many women, particularly young women, still feel in the face of this liberationist creed. To please their pornified boyfriends, they suggest going to strip clubs together or arrange breast implants for themselves. Those who are ambivalent fear being thought of as prudes. “I wanted to be a cool girlfriend,” one thirty-four-year-old tells Paul, explaining why she made a habit of watching pornography with her boyfriend, only to have him eventually refuse to engage in sex with her unless a video was running at the same time.

To this sort of shame-faced thinking, as well as to the “whatever-turns-you-on” ethos to which it is a cowed reaction, Paul has a refreshing and utterly correct response. There is no shame, no hint

of sexual hang-up, and certainly no threat to free speech in censoring a culture that makes women feel inadequate if they dislike revolting pictures or that turns sex toys into a fit subject for university seminars. Not so long ago, fighting such a culture would have been considered the very definition of normalcy.

Psychohistory

The Oslo Syndrome: Delusions of a People Under Siege

by Kenneth Levin

Smith & Kraus. 571 pp. \$35.00

Reviewed by
Hillel Halkin

IT HAS long been obvious to all but the incurably or willfully blind that the 1993 agreement signed in Oslo between the government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization was a horrendous blunder on Israel's part. Rarely in history has a country so foolishly opened its gates to a Trojan horse as Israel did when it welcomed Yasir Arafat and his PLO brigades, handed over to them most of the Gaza Strip and much of the West Bank, and gave them the arms to impose their rule on the local inhabitants. How could such a mistake have been made by experienced political and military leaders, statesmen and generals whose careers had spanned a half-century of managing Israel's bitter conflict with the Arabs?

A year afterward, when the Oslo agreement was already headed toward its eventual collapse, I found myself musing about this question with a good friend of mine, the

HILLEL HALKIN, a columnist for the *Jerusalem Post* and the *New York Sun*, wrote about the *Eichmann trial* in the *July-August COMMENTARY*.

Harvard professor of Yiddish literature and fellow COMMENTARY contributor Ruth Wisse. Whereas she had been strongly against the Oslo agreement from the start, I had initially been less certain about it. It had deeply troubled and scared me; but although I did not take part in the delirium of applause that greeted the Rabin-Arafat handshake on the White House lawn, neither did I immediately join the critics. Surely, I thought, Israel's leaders must have some idea of what they were doing. I would wait and see—and hope for the best.

Now I said to Ruth:

"Tell me something. You and I have had our share of political disagreements in the past. You've always said that Israeli concessions to the Palestinians would result in a disastrous cave-in, and I've always said that concessions had to be made. Now they have been made—

and you were right and I was wrong. How did you, who live in America, understand what I, who live in Israel, failed to see?"

"It's because I know my Yiddish literature," Ruth replied.

AT FIRST I thought she was joking. Then I realized she had said something profound—profound enough, in any case, to merit 600 pages of exegesis in Kenneth Levin's well-researched and strenuously argued new work of psychohistory, *The Oslo Syndrome*.

Levin, a Boston psychiatrist, has written a book about the psychological dimensions of Jewish political behavior from medieval Europe to the present. This is the period in which Yiddish was the spoken, and in part the written, language of most of European Jewry—and if understanding a people's behavior means understanding its soul (which

is often best expressed in its literature), *The Oslo Syndrome* is a soul-searching book.

Levin's thesis is both simple and complex—the former because reducible to a few broad generalizations, the latter because buttressed by a large number of historical examples. Until the modern age, Levin argues, Europe's Jews, though a minority dispersed among Christians and at the mercy of their rulers, lived in autonomous, self-governing communities that looked inward for their values and had a high degree of self-esteem. Proud of their religion and learning, Jews had a healthy collective ego. While Christian prejudice was always menacing and sometimes wreaked devastation, it never eroded their confidence in the superiority of their own way of life.

All this began to change, Levin writes, at the time of the Enlight-

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enment, when the first glimmerings of social and political equality enticed Jews with the prospect of integration into European society. Since Jewish emancipation was fiercely debated by Christians, it now mattered to Jews for the first time not only how Christians behaved toward them, but what Christians *thought* of them. And here they encountered a problem, because the Christian supporters of emancipation did not on the whole think highly of Jews at all—no more highly, indeed, than did emancipation's opponents.

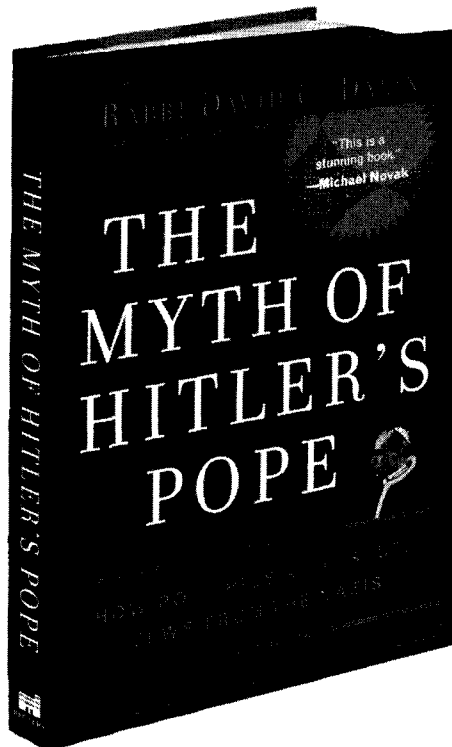
For the most part, that is, Enlightenment intellectuals in France, England, and elsewhere shared the traditional Christian perception of the Jews as backward, avaricious, parasitic, and morally corrupt. They differed only in their assessment of what was to be done. Jews, declared *philosophes* like Diderot and Voltaire,

were at bottom no less human than others, but their humanity had been warped by their own narrow-minded religion and by centuries of Christian persecution. Cease persecuting them; induce them to abandon their religion; educate them and teach them useful trades, and they would become good Europeans like their Christian neighbors.

What happened next, in Levin's account, is what psychologists call internalization, the mental process by which we adopt the attitudes of authority figures we identify with, especially when we are also dependent on them. As a class of homegrown Jewish intellectuals or *maskilim* ("enlighteners," after Haskalah, the Hebrew word for the Enlightenment) began to develop in the late-18th and 19th centuries, first in Germany and then in Eastern Europe, pro-emancipation European intellectuals became its role models; yet since these

same European intellectuals were generally hostile to Judaism and its practitioners, both the *maskilim* and the large numbers of Jews who were influenced by them made this hostility their own. From here was born the ego-attacking pathology of Jewish self-blame and self-denigration—a pathology, Levin believes, that lies at the root of a great deal of later Jewish politics, up to and including the capitulation at Oslo.

How DOES one get from the *maskilim* to Oslo? On the whole, Levin observes, the forces calling for the admission of the Jews to European society in return for their abandonment of Jewish particularism were on the political Left. Hence Jews, particularly Jewish intellectuals, tended to identify themselves with the Left, so that even when the neo-particularist movement of Jewish nationalism known as Zionism ap-



THE MYTH OF HITLER'S POPE

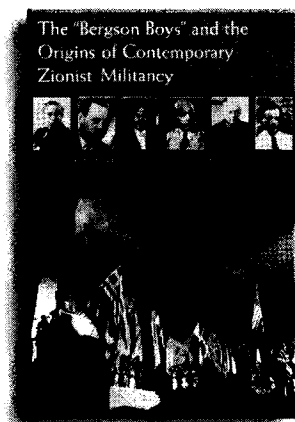
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peared on the scene in the late 19th century, it soon came to be dominated by its left wing. Although Theodor Herzl was himself a liberal in the classic European sense, even before his premature death in 1904 his views were being challenged by utopian socialists.

By the 1920's, the Left, in the form of "Labor Zionism," had taken control of the international Zionist organization Herzl founded and of the political life of the Jewish community in Palestine.

Proud Jewish nationalists though they claimed to be, these Labor Zionist politicians and intellectuals were, in Levin's description, infected with the very pathology of self-denigration that Zionism had ostensibly repudiated. For them, Jewish independence in a Jewish state could not be an end in itself, as it was for the Zionist Right. Unless Zionism served some higher purpose that remade the Jews into a worthier people, purged of the dross of their exilic existence, it could not be justified. Levin quotes Martin Buber:

Our argument . . . does not concern the Jewish state. . . . It does not concern the addition of one more trifling power structure. . . . Zion restored will become the house of the Lord for all peoples and the center of the new world.

Such unbounded utopianism, however, had its downside. If Zion did *not* become "the house of the Lord," Zionism would be to blame; if a Jewish state had neighbors that refused to make peace with it, it could not be a house "for all peoples." A less than perfect Zionism was a failure.

As Levin sees it, then, Labor Zionism's legacy from the period of the Haskalah was the assumption that a Jewish state having enemies must deserve them. Just as the *maskilim* conceded that Christian Europe had valid reasons for disliking the Jews, so part of the Zionist Left conceded the legitimacy of

Arab hatred of Israel; and as the *maskilim* insisted that the Jews had to change if they were to be accepted by European society, so some Labor Zionists insisted that Israel must mend its ways before it could become part of the Middle East.

As a psychiatrist, Levin discerns a clear parallel between such reactions and those of abused children and battered wives, who commonly blame themselves for causing the cruelty meted out to them. In both cases, the delusion that the guilt is one's own serves a dual purpose, enabling the victims to go on believing in the good intentions of those whose love they crave while at the same time feeling that they are in control of their own situation, which they can ameliorate by better behavior.

True, Levin writes, this syndrome did not, historically, play a major role in Israeli intellectual or political life until the 1970's. On the contrary: throughout the years of the British Mandate in Palestine, the Holocaust, the establishment of Israel, and the struggles and accomplishments of the Jewish state's early years, the opinion-makers of Europe and America were sufficiently friendly or neutral toward Zionism to enable the mainstream Zionist Left to believe in the justice of its cause. Self-blame was largely limited to the fringes.

Starting with the 1967 war and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, however, all this began to change. The intellectual and political climate in the West, particularly on the Left, shifted increasingly against Israel precisely as Arab military, terror, and propaganda attacks against it escalated; the failure of Israeli concessions to make a dent in this trend only increased the sense of siege that the Zionist Left, which had for the first time lost a national election to the Right in 1977, was now experiencing. Once the Right was in power, it, and not the Arabs, could

be blamed for the siege. It and its policies were depicted by the Left as traditional Judaism had been depicted by the *maskilim*: the ugly face of the Jewish people that had to be replaced if acceptance was to be gained in the family of nations.

In the end, indeed, the Zionist Left turned on Zionism itself. It was Zionism in all its forms, more and more Israeli intellectuals began to declare, that was the cause of its own plight. By the time the Left regained power in the 1992 election, Levin writes,

the drumbeat of that literary-artistic rhetoric, of the New History, of the anti-Zionist/post-Zionist academic writings, and of the peace movement [had grown] ever louder in its promotions of new directions . . . that would lead to the national self-abnegation and concessions that its purveyors chose to believe could not help but assure peace.

It was the return of the repressed: the old syndrome of Jewish self-denigration had resurfaced with a vengeance in the Jewish state. All that was needed for it to produce fatal new policies was the right political leaders. Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin fit the bill. The stage for Oslo was set.

Is THIS a fully satisfactory reading of modern Jewish history? Of Israeli history? Of what happened in 1993?

Obviously not. All psychohistories, whether of individuals or of nations, suffer from circularity and over-determinism. In addition, no psychohistory of a people can be more than, at best, a poetic construction of the past. A collective mind or soul is a metaphor, not something with a discrete existence of its own. Individuals alone have minds.

The two individuals most responsible for going to Oslo were not, to judge by their previous careers, men given to Jewish self-blame. Rabin was a tough ex-general who, in his previous job as min-

ister of defense in Yitzhak Shamir's 1988-1992 national-unity government, had famously called for "breaking the arms and legs" of Palestinians in the first *intifada*. Peres, identified in the past with the hawks of the Labor party, was a former patron of the West Bank settlers. Neither man had been known for his sympathy with the Palestinian cause.

Many explanations have been given for their turnabout. There was the late-80's *intifada* itself, which had demonstrated the depth and determination of Palestinian resistance to Israel's military occupation. There was the 1991 Madrid conference, which made clear that there were no moderate Palestinian leaders, uncontrolled by the PLO, to negotiate with. The PLO itself, moreover, while continuing its campaign of terror, had gradually softened its public positions and was now indicating a readiness to recognize Israel in return for a Palestinian state.

Furthermore, the 1991 American-led Gulf war, by destroying the Iraqi army, had removed the military threat of an "eastern front" that a Palestinian state might align itself with. The growing strength of Hamas in the occupied territories was a cause for worry that, if Israel did not strike a deal with the PLO, the Islamic fundamentalists would soon take control there; indeed, intelligence reports were pointing to the imminent spread of Islamic terror everywhere, which could only be countered by strengthening the moderate forces in the Arab world. And in addition, there was mounting international pressure on Israel to end its conflict with the Palestinians by withdrawing from most or all of the territories. Each of these considerations carried weight; none was related to Jewish self-blame.

True, as Levin documents, there had also been a major shift, especially on the Left, in Israeli attitudes toward the conflict. This undoubt-



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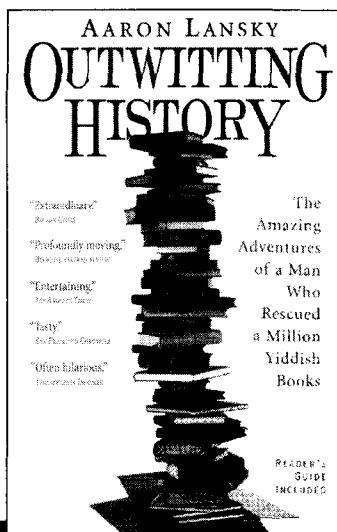
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edly influenced Rabin and Peres in two ways. On the one hand, it caused them to doubt the staying power of the Israeli public; the danger seemed real to them that, weary of sacrifice and losing its morale, Israelis might "crack" if the conflict continued, sapping the country's strength and ability to defend itself. On the other hand, there was now a ripeness on the Left, and even in the political Center, for concessions that would have been unthinkable a few years earlier. This certainly encouraged the two men to believe that a volte-face toward the PLO, negotiations with which had been ruled out by the Labor party until then, could marshal the needed public support.

What one can say, then, is that the "Oslo syndrome," though not a sufficient condition for what happened in 1993, may have been a necessary one. Without it, Israel's leaders, persuaded by wishful thinking to shut their eyes to the PLO's having remained an organization bent on Israel's destruction, might have considered an agreement with it, only to reject such a thing as politically inexpedient.

BEYOND THIS, however, Levin's interpretation of Zionist and modern Jewish history, which is also a political polemic written from the perspective of the Zionist Right, raises major questions that remain unanswered.

Labor Zionism, Levin maintains, sinned against the Jewish people by endorsing and even heightening the Haskalah's critique of traditional Judaism and Jewish life. The Zionist Left saw this life as religiously petrified, culturally backward, economically unproductive, and unhealthily divorced from nature and the natural self. It viewed Zionism not merely as a movement for Jewish independence but as a radical antidote for an ailing nation, a heroic attempt to nurse the Jewish people back to spiritual and physical health. In adopting this perspective,

Levin's argument goes, it assimilated the *philosophes'* original portrait of the Jews.

And yet was Labor Zionism really so wrong about what it saw? If we were to reconstruct 19th- and early-20th-century Eastern European Jewish life from the sometimes harshly critical, sometimes comically satirical Hebrew and Yiddish literature of the period, we might end up seeing something very similar.

This is of course the literature that Ruth Wisse was talking about, or at least that part of it in which the Jewish penchant for self-blame is exaggerated. But here we come to the dialectical crux of the matter, which Levin, who prefers his psychohistory to be straightforward, never quite comes to grips with. Labor Zionism, in its assertion of Jewish nationhood and the Jewish right to the land of Israel, coupled with its desire to build a new society there that would cast off the perceived shamefulness of Jewish exile, was at once a powerful affirmation and a powerful negation. Without the negation, however, the energies of an Eastern European Jewish youth in open revolt against the world of its parents could never have been harnessed in the Zionist cause. Like the positive and negative poles of an electric circuit, both opposites were needed to create a current.

This is a difficult truth for those who, like Levin, prefer to keep the positive and the negative in Zionist history neatly apart—a separation that is even less tenable when applied to Jewish history as a whole. Certainly, Jewish self-blame, or "self-hatred" as it is often called, is a well-known phenomenon in modern Jewish life. Yet to assume, as Levin does, that it is a distinctly modern phenomenon is simply to ignore all of Jewish history that precedes it. One must start, indeed, with the Bible—a volume from whose pages, particularly its prophetic books, self-blame leaps at the eye

on page after page. Again and again the prophets accuse Israel of bringing down its enemies upon itself and of being at fault for the tribulations God afflicts on it.

Furthermore, the biblical message that all of Israel's misfortunes are well-deserved punishments is echoed in subsequent Jewish texts throughout the ages, in which every catastrophe to befall the Jewish people—the failed revolt against Rome, the anti-Jewish massacres of the Crusades, the expulsion from Spain, the terrible pogroms in 17th-century Ukraine, even the Holocaust—has been put down by at least some Jews to Jewish sinfulness.

MEDIEVAL JEWISH self-esteem was not quite so unshakable as Levin purports it to be, and Jewish self-blame does not begin with the age of the European Enlightenment, even if his desire to think so is understandable. There is after all only so much bad news that one can take, and the news that in the modern age, even in a Jewish state, Jews have had a perverse tendency to accept their adversity as well-deserved is bad enough. To have to add that this tendency extends back to the earliest existence of the Jewish people and constitutes an apparently ineradicable three-thousand-year-old habit may be more than any proud Jew can bear. Was the first step toward Oslo really taken in the shadow of Sinai?

Perhaps; but faced with questions of such immensity, psychohistory needs to be modest. Collective self-blame, as Americans of every stripe know, is not a uniquely Jewish phenomenon, even if there are also cultures, such as that of Islam, in which it can barely be said to exist. Nor is it always unhealthy or unmerited where it does exist. And although it might be possible to trace the ways in which the traditional self-blame of religious Jews turned into the self-blame of the anti-religious Jewish and Zionist Left, while largely disappearing from both the secular

and religious Zionist Right, these are anything but simple. Psychohistory can help to explain many things, but it is never *the* explanation for anything. Not all roads led to Oslo. Many paths, though, did converge on it.

State of the "Nation"

A Matter of Opinion

by Victor S. Navasky

Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 426 pp. \$27.00

Reviewed by
Nell Rosenthal

EVEN IF this memoir tells only part of the story—as is clearly the case—Victor S. Navasky, who was born in 1932, is certainly among the most cheerful men in the world and may just be the most satisfied. Although the book mainly focuses on Navasky's experience since 1978 as the editor, and more recently the publisher, of the *Nation*, America's foremost leftist journal, both his understanding of the world and his complete comfort with that understanding seem to have been fixed in him from the time of his childhood and youth at the Little Red School House and Elizabeth Irwin High School, the linked private schools in New York City that from their founding were dedicated to left-wing politics and culture.

Some former students at these schools have moved well beyond their influence. But among Navasky's most pleasantly unshakable memories, he tells us, are such transfiguring experiences as listening in elementary school to the songs of Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie and singing "the anti-fascist songs of the

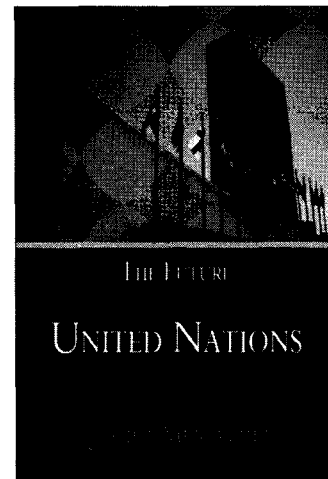
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International Brigade in Spain." Without necessarily knowing its name, he and his classmates were being inducted into the ideas and prescriptions of the Soviet-organized Popular Front of the mid-1930's, one of whose most memorable slogans was "Communism is 20th-century Americanism."

Over the years, Navasky admits, he has learned—from reading George Orwell, from Nikita Khrushchev's 1956 revelations of the crimes committed by Joseph Stalin, and, more recently, from the "Venona" decrypts of Soviet diplomatic messages—that "some things were wrong with this particular naïve internationalist vision," which remained a fixture of a certain Western mindset far beyond its brief life in Soviet doctrine. But then he quotes the words of the late Michael Harrington:

Though the Popular Front was

sometimes manipulated to rationalize cruelty rather than to promote kindness, for all its confusions and evasions and contradictions, it was a corruption of something good that always remained in it. . . . My heart still quickens when I hear the songs of the International Brigade.

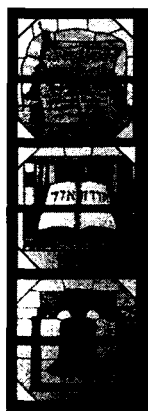
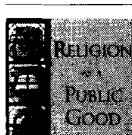
"Mine, too," adds Navasky.

That "mine, too" bespeaks a spirit lastingly untroubled by the horrors, social and political, visited upon the world by the implementers of Navasky's still-cherished radical beliefs. Nothing in Navasky's universe, it seems, has ever been sufficiently cataclysmic to shake his steady faith in the goodness of socialism and the evil of American capitalism. As we learn from him here, virtually his whole pre-*Nation* career as a journalist, which included freelancing for and serving as an editor at the *New York Times Maga-*

zine, was devoted to the search for instances of government malfeasance—the government in question being that of the United States—and the spirited defense of perfectly innocent Americans whose only crime was to hold "naïve internationalist" views. (See *Naming Names*, his whitewashing book about the Hollywood Communists.) In that sense, the *Nation* was only the next stop on the train.

OF COURSE, the *Nation* had a storied and checkered career in the history of American journalism long before Navasky took the helm. As, moreover, a weekly magazine of opinion, it has continued under his stewardship to range somewhat more widely than its editor, and has been open to the full scope of left-wing political and literary interests. Navasky has been sufficiently hospitable to these to have kept the

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magazine's readership well satisfied week by week, year by year, for close to two decades as editor and a decade more as publisher. (Under Katrina vanden Heuvel, whom he appointed as editor in 1995, neither the policy nor the substance has changed.) Without that satisfaction, either he or the magazine would have been long gone.

Which means that, as an entrepreneur, Navasky has been nothing if not active on the *Nation's* behalf, and the story of his activity makes up by far the most interesting part of this book. He has pushed along the careers and burnished the fame of a number of leftist writers; trained a number of interns to become editors; successfully raised money when he has needed to; maintained both complete editorial freedom and happy relations with the magazine's angels; served the leftist literary community as an occasional mobilizer, as when in the 1980's he stirred the long-moribund Writers' Union back into life; organized public programs, lectures, and panel discussions without number; and even put together what he hoped would be an annual conference to discuss problems of common concern with the editors of various conservative magazines. All this, while writing, lecturing, debating, and in general reacting to the myriad alleged injustices imposed upon American citizens and the world by the militarism and concupiscence of successive Washington administrations (bitterly disappointing to Navasky when run by Democrats, literally criminal when by Republicans).

Much of this activity is spoken of by Navasky in a tone of high good humor, as if his life as editor, publisher, and opinion-maker were a cheerful walk in the park. Indeed, so at ease has he remained in his ideological skin that, with one partial exception, he seems never to have felt the need to reassess his acceptance of just about every last item in the Moscow-inspired ver-

sion of modern political history. That partial exception has to do with the atomic-espionage case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, belief in whose innocence had long remained a crucial test of loyalty for the old Popular Front; in the end, Navasky appears to have reconciled himself to the now generally held verdict that Julius, at least, was guilty as charged.

But thus far, and no farther. Take the Hiss case, a no less crucial test of "progressive" loyalties. According to the unswerving line of the day, Alger Hiss, a selfless public servant, had been traduced by Whittaker Chambers and monstrously framed by the FBI in the late 1940's as a Communist agent. But then, in 1978, a sensational book on the case by the historian Allen Weinstein, who had undertaken his research on the assumption that Hiss was indeed innocent, ended instead by proving his guilt. A number of former believers were, reluctantly, convinced by Weinstein's argument. Not so, Victor Navasky. He recounts here how he went through Weinstein's *Perjury* with a fine-tooth comb, finding phony evidence here, irrelevant evidence there, improper manipulation of evidence elsewhere: in sum, a case not closed.

What followed was a public altercation with Weinstein from which Navasky still believes himself to have emerged the winner. After this came further battles, especially in the 1990's when, with the fall of the Soviet Union, fresh evidence turned up in Russian files. In 1995, the scholars Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes, in *The Secret World of American Communism*, made use of this evidence to demonstrate authoritatively Hiss's guilt. But still Navasky remained, and still he proudly remains, obdurate. He will, he says, continue to wait patiently for "a reasoned assessment of the evidence." We need not hold our breaths.

Still another test of Navasky's serene imperturbability occurred in

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1982 when Susan Sontag, facing an audience of her fellow radicals at Town Hall in New York, proclaimed her own emergence from the progressive dreamland by denouncing European Communism as "fascism with a human face." Even more breathtakingly, she went on to assert that, down through the decades, a follower of the *Reader's Digest* would have learned more about the terrible reality of the Soviet Union than a follower of the *Nation* or the *British New Statesman*.

The shock of this unimpeachably true assertion, and the enraged public ruckus that ensued, are hard to overstate; at the time, no one may have been more shocked than Sontag herself, who never again dared repeat her statement or anything resembling it. But Navasky has sailed on.

THERE IS something central to the nature of Navasky's *Nation* that I have already touched on but whose existence is scarcely allowed to mar the genial, engaging surface of *A Matter of Opinion*. And that is the magazine's general enmity toward the United States of America and virtually all of its works and ways, foreign and domestic. Latterly, this same enmity has been extended to the state of Israel as well.

The magazine's ideological posture has, if anything, grown only stronger since the fall of the Soviet Union, and the reason is not far to seek. After a point, it became impossible to hold, as Navasky had been brought up to do, that Communism was the real 20th-century Americanism—for, by the end of the century, there was no Soviet Communism left. There is still, however, a popular front, bereft of Soviet backing but helped along by an energetic cadre of West Europeans, and it has a new slogan. Anti-Americanism is the new Americanism.

In the public prints, the *Nation* is one of the primary headquarters of the new popular front. But what does any of this have to do with the genial, engaging Victor Navasky,

author of the genial and engaging *A Matter of Opinion*? If anyone were to accuse *him* of anti-Americanism, let alone of anti-Semitism, he would surely feign dismay and hurt. After all, is he not a nice guy? Does he not fight only for truth and justice? Does not his magazine faithfully fulfill its reformist mandate as America's loyal opposition by democratically taking part in lobbying campaigns and by supporting and opposing candidates for public office? (This last point has financial implications; if Navasky were to register the magazine as a non-profit, tax-exempt charity, which would compel him to forgo certain forms of explicit politicking, his lot as a fund-raiser would arguably be easier.)

Is he not, then, truly on the side of the angels? And thus sheathed in virtue, how can *he* be faulted if the wonderfully diverse opinions voiced in his magazine happen to have included the openly anti-Semitic canards of his late dear friend Edward Said and others, or the vicious anti-American propaganda of Alexander Cockburn, or the accusation by one especially venomous writer that Norman Podhoretz, of all people, has been guilty of disloyalty to America on behalf of the interests of the state of Israel—a "libel," as David Greenberg notes in reviewing this book for the liberal journal *American Prospect*, that Navasky characteristically shrugs off with a jape? How, indeed?

SO HERE he stands, happy ringmaster of the country's most successful anti-American circus. In the center ring parades a small army of revolutionists, apologists for terrorism and/or left-wing dictatorships, professionally angry blacks, women, homosexuals, environmentalists, pacifists, even anarchocommunists and Luddites. All are sincerely devoted to doing damage to the republic.

So far, the republic has managed to withstand them—to the good fortune, ironically, of Navasky and

his merry band. For only *misfortune* would await them in a society that had surrendered to their prescriptions and promptly removed the protective institutions against which they have sworn eternal battle. No wonder, then, that Victor Navasky is so pleased with his achievement. Being an American radical means never having to say thank-you, and never having to say you're sorry.

Facts & Forces

China Hands: Nine Decades of Adventure, Espionage, and Diplomacy in Asia

by James Lilley with
Jeffrey Lilley

Public Affairs. 417 pp. \$30.00

Reviewed by
Gabriel Schoenfeld

HOW DOES the United States exercise its power in Asia, and to what end? The tapestry is vast, but one American with an extraordinary grasp of its many threads is James Lilley. Now in retirement following a decades-long career rising through the CIA and the Department of State, this American spy and diplomat has written a fascinating and highly personal memoir that sheds light on a whole spectrum of critical issues.

Lilley begins *China Hands* with the story of his youth. He had the unusual fortune of being born (in 1928) in the Chinese coastal city of Tsingtao, on the Yellow Sea. His father was a missionary, but of the commercial and not the Christian sort; after dropping out of Cornell, he had taken a position plying the Yangtze river on a junk, peddling

GABRIEL SCHOENFELD is the senior editor of COMMENTARY.

kerosene as a salesman for Standard Oil. James was the youngest of his four children, all born in China; Frank, the first born, whose tragic shadow towers over this memoir, was eight years older.

Frank was young James's hero, guiding him through the shoals of a colorful childhood in China (with occasional stints in boarding schools in Korea and the U.S.) and serving as a kind of model for how to live. But as war came to ravage Asia in the 1930's, Frank (who attended Yale and then, through ROTC, became an officer in the U.S. Army) was caught in the grip of a crushing depression. At the close of World War II, stationed near the rubble of Hiroshima by the military, he put a bullet in his head.

The lesson drawn from this shattering event by the young James, now eighteen years old and serving as a private in the army, was both personal and in the largest sense political:

Frank had been a dreamer, pacifist, and philosopher who had felt deeply and who died young. I developed differently, eschewing romanticism and excessive emotion and inclined to deal with facts and forces as they presented themselves. I felt it was important to stay away from disillusionment.

This desire to deal with "facts and forces," particularly those set in motion by the cold war, led James, like many of the brightest, politically engaged men of his generation, into a career in the fledgling CIA.

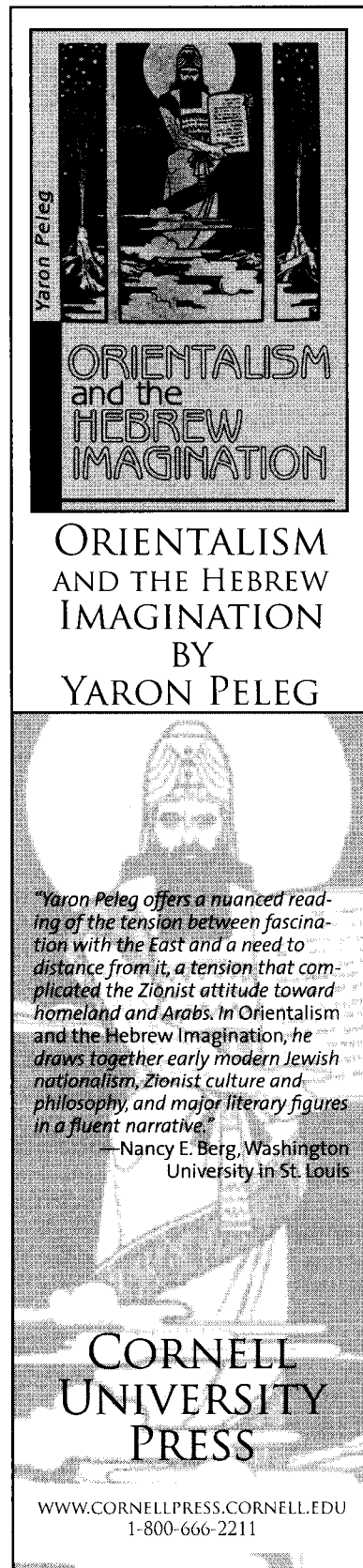
LILLEY SPENT the next years in a wide variety of agency postings, almost all of them undercover, in Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Laos, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Hong Kong. For much of this period, Lilley had the primary mission of obtaining information about developments inside the closed world of Communist China, then experiencing, successively, the vast human disasters of

Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. But the CIA, then as now, was prone to dysfunction, with a distinctive tendency to devote attention to "process over substance," focusing more on how intelligence was obtained than on what the intelligence meant.

By the mid-70's, after two decades of debriefing travelers, running agents, and engaging in other forms of derring-do, sometimes paramilitary in nature, Lilley had become one of the U.S. government's most seasoned Asia specialists. Returning to headquarters in Virginia for a spell, he became acquainted with George H. W. Bush, who had been named to run the CIA by President Gerald Ford. Lilley evidently made an impression; a decade later, with Bush serving as Ronald Reagan's Vice President, he was awarded his first ambassadorship, arriving in South Korea just as that country was entering a critical pass.

Chun Doo Hwan, a South Korean army general who had seized power in 1979 in a coup d'etat, was ruling in draconian fashion, massacring hundreds of students in the southern city of Kwangju and imprisoning the dissident leader Kim Dae Jung. In 1987, shortly after Lilley presented his credentials in Seoul, Chun's term in office was scheduled to draw to a close. Yet the military strongman was maneuvering to stay on, provoking hundreds of thousands of pro-democracy demonstrators to gather in the streets of the capital. Similar protests began to unfold throughout the peninsula; the demonstrators were no longer students, as in Kwangju, but a cross-section of the emerging middle class. The question on everyone's mind was: would Chun declare martial law and follow it with an even bloodier repetition of 1979?

In the middle of these dramatic events, the Reagan administration stepped in. Reagan had been an unapologetic supporter of Chun's regime as a bulwark against the ag-



gressive Communist North, and Chun had been among the first foreign leaders invited to the White House following his election in 1980. Lilley himself courted Chun assiduously, opting controversially to attend a convention of the ruling Democratic Justice party that 60 other ambassadors were boycotting.

But when push came to shove, it was precisely this willingness to dirty his hands by embracing a friendly dictator that gave Lilley the necessary modicum of influence. As Chun clung to power, a letter from Reagan, hand-delivered by Lilley and accompanied by an unambiguous articulation of the U.S. position, had the desired effect. That very afternoon, Chun announced he would not impose martial law. Less than two weeks later, he astonished the world by accepting all of the opposition's demands, including direct election of the president and the release of Kim Dae Jung. With the U.S. serving as midwife, South Korean democracy, stable and today functioning smoothly for two decades, was born.

IN LILLEY's next posting, as ambassador to Beijing, a similar drama was set to play out on a much grander scale, but with very different results. In the most riveting chapters of this memoir, Lilley recounts the events of Tiananmen Square in 1989. Unlike in South Korea, the American embassy's role was primarily that of an observer. But as Lilley acknowledges, a question mark still dangles hauntingly over this entire episode: did the Bush administration miss a chance, however slim, to intervene and avert the tragedy?

Lilley had assumed his ambassadorial post on May 2, when things were already hot; "stepping on a volcano" was how the *New York Times* described his arrival. At first he and his staff were slow to grasp the significance of the demonstrations taking place in Beijing's central plaza. A visit by Mikhail Gorbachev on May 15 was perceived by

Washington in classic cold-war terms, as a moment to *bolster* ties with the Chinese military in order to offset any potential inroads by the Russian bear.

But as the demonstrations mushroomed, all such reasoning was dropped. The embassy mobilized its resources to gather information, both about the character of the student movement and about developments inside the highest echelons of the Communist regime. With a talented staff reporting to him from across Beijing, and from U.S. consulates in other cities, Lilley was able to observe the successive efforts of the military to crush the students, beginning with the soft crackdown sardonically called "partial martial" and culminating in the terrible day of June 4 when the People's Liberation Army sprayed machine gun fire on unarmed civilians to clear the square.

As the Chinese moved from push to shove to shooting, Lilley was dispatching cables to Washington, describing events in close detail and offering his best predictions of what was likely to happen next. On May 21, he forecast that a "confrontation resulting in bloodshed is probable." Five days later, he cabled that bloodshed was no longer probable but "imminent."

Yet the policymakers in Washington saw things differently. If *China Hands* offers a window into how an American embassy operates in the midst of an international firestorm, it also offers a revealing glimpse into the larger machinery of U.S. foreign-policy making, especially as that machinery was being run by such pragmatists as Brent Scowcroft (National Security Adviser), James Baker (Secretary of State), and George Bush himself (now President, and having serious difficulty articulating a "vision thing").

President Bush, writes Lilley, had enjoyed a fifteen-year "personal relationship" with the Chinese party chief Deng Xiaoping, and fixedly perceived him as "a leader who sought reform and opening up and

would avoid harming U.S.-China relations." Both Bush and the men beneath him were "under the delusion that the standoff between the students and the government would have a peaceful outcome." Thus, when the Chinese military swung into action on June 4, the White House was caught unawares.

Returning to Washington for consultations after the massacre, Lilley was obliquely rebuked by Bush for failing to warn him of the impending crackdown. "I got a strange sense," writes Lilley, "that the President was asking me to justify myself as if I had *not* been writing cables warning of a bloody suppression of the student movement." The mystery was cleared up soon enough: since Lilley had been tagged an "alarmist" by Baker's team at State, his on-the-money cables were left to languish at lower rungs of the bureaucracy, never making it to the President's desk.

This failure was not lacking in consequence. Fumbling in the dark, directed only by their own illusions, the unrealistic realists running U.S. foreign policy failed to exercise even the highly circumscribed influence on the Chinese leadership they might have otherwise commanded. Though Lilley acknowledges that diplomatic intervention by Washington held only a faint possibility of averting the bloodbath, the administration never even tried. In particular, the Bush team neglected to consider the single avenue open to it: sending an emissary of stature like Henry Kissinger or Richard Nixon to warn the Chinese leadership of "serious repercussions from a crackdown."

THE STRENGTH of *China Hands* lies in its bird's-eye view of American foreign policy at the operational level. For a portrait of exactly what CIA agents were up to in Asia in the successive battles of the cold war, and for a view of exactly what American embassies do in the midst of a crisis, few accounts rival Lilley's.

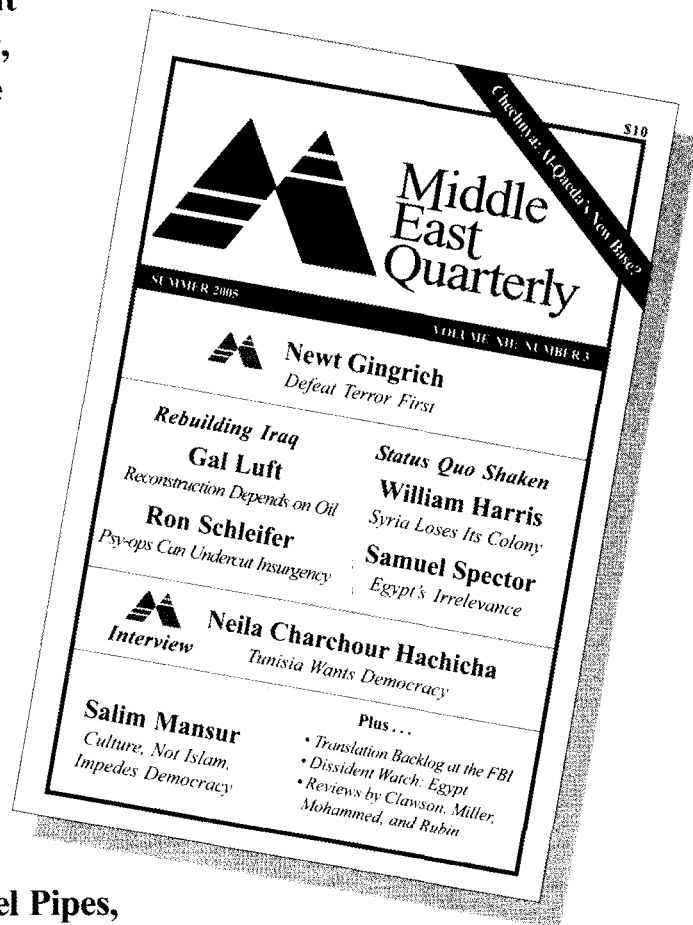
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The weakness of *China Hands* is equally pronounced: Lilley never steps back and tells us precisely what one can learn from his account of "nine decades of adventure, espionage, and diplomacy in Asia." This is a large lacuna, for many unexplored themes lurk just beneath the surface of his engrossing narrative.

Perhaps the most significant has to do with the abiding tension in U.S. foreign policy between the exercise of power and the promotion of ideals. That tension is on display throughout Lilley's memoir, and nowhere more so than in his "tale of two cities"—Seoul and Beijing. As an ambassador in these two major Asian capitals, and as a decades-long employee of the clandestine arm of the government, Lilley had prolonged exposure to the conflicting considerations that shape American policy, from advancing commercial interests, to enhancing military security, to promoting universal values.

Facing this mix, Lilley emerges as a proponent and a practitioner of a realistic brand of realism, hard-nosed in its way but nevertheless distinct from the pinched vision of his main taskmasters in Washington. In one fashion or another, at virtually every moment of his career, whether countering Communism in China and Vietnam or fostering democratic norms in Taiwan and Korea, Lilley upheld the universal truths on which our country was founded as an essential element in the balance of competing American objectives.

This, in the end, may be the lesson Lilley drew so painfully from the negative example of his brother: even the pursuit of the loftiest goals requires a serious engagement with "facts and forces," and a no less serious acknowledgement that "disillusionment" can come in more than one form.

God's House

The Temple of Jerusalem

By Simon Goldhill

Harvard. 194 pp. \$19.95

Reviewed by
Benjamin Balint

THE FIRST time I went up to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, I did so with the trepidation of someone aware of the thick skein of rabbinic prohibitions that enfolds this holiest of Jewish sites. But when I entered the compound, I became subject to a restriction emanating from an entirely different source. "If you try to say your prayers here, even under your breath," said a stern official of the Waqf, the Muslim religious trust that administers the site, "we are going to remove you." In the most sacred of Jewish places, I was made to feel foreign and out of place, a barely tolerated guest.

Had I read Simon Goldhill's new book at the time, I would have more richly appreciated the irony. In a crisp and lucid style, Goldhill, a classicist at Cambridge University, sets out to write a history both of ancient Jerusalem's glorious House of God and of the ways it has been imagined over the 2,000 years since its final destruction by the Romans.

The lively story he tells in the book's first half begins with the Tabernacle—the temporary desert dwelling-place for the Ark of the Covenant, on which the successive temples of Jerusalem were all modeled. But Goldhill moves quickly to King Solomon, who built the structure that came to be known as the First Temple. This magnificent building rested on Mount Moriah, traditionally regarded as the foundation stone of Creation as well as the site of Abraham's binding of his son Isaac and of Jacob's dream of the ladder ascending to heaven.

Completed in 953 B.C.E. by

BENJAMIN BALINT, a writer living in Jerusalem, is associate editor of *Azure*.

30,000 workers using stone, gold, and cedars from Lebanon, the First Temple comprised three adjoining chambers of increasing holiness: an outer vestibule, a main hall, and a holy of holies, the inner sanctum that housed the Ark. By all accounts, it was unmatched in its splendor. "When Solomon completed the temple," says an ancient midrash, "God announced, 'Now the work of the heavens and the earth is complete.'"

Having completed it, Solomon made his temple not only the center of the sacrificial rite but also the powerful axis of national life, host to the three annual mass pilgrimages and, as the seat of the highest court, the heart of an extensive judiciary. The building's destruction in 586 B.C.E. at the hands of the Babylonians was exquisitely lamented by the prophet Jeremiah, who witnessed the devastation and was himself exiled in its wake; it became the defining loss of Jewish history.

THOUGH IN time the mourners were permitted to return from captivity, the temple they managed to erect, inspired by the prophet Ezekiel, was rather less grand. This building, about which not much more is known than that it was an impoverished sequel to the first, stood for 500 years. In the year 19 B.C.E., King Herod replaced it with a magnificent edifice, known as the Second Temple, which made up in grandeur what it lacked in holiness.

Built on a truly monumental scale, the new temple boasted a façade some 50 yards high, staircases as wide as four-lane highways, balustrades, colonnades, altars, tapestries, and platforms for choiring Levites, all resting on a plaza the size of a dozen football fields and supported by brilliantly constructed walls. (A small part of one of these now forms the Western Wall.) The Talmud, while noting that the Second Temple lacked the Ark and much of the spiritual purity of the first, concedes that "whoever has not seen Herod's temple has never seen a beautiful building." Josephus seconded this judgment:

The outside of the building lacked nothing to astonish mind or eye. It was covered on all sides with massive plates of gold. When the sun came up, it radiated so fiery a flash that people had to avert their eyes.

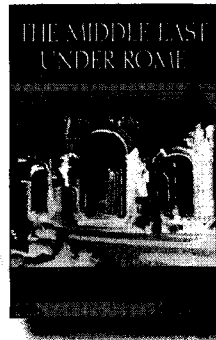
It stood for less than 90 years until the Roman army destroyed it in the year 70, ploughed over the Temple Mount, and brought the spoils back to Rome. Thereafter, Jews were banned from entering Jerusalem (now renamed Aelia Capitolina), being left instead with only imagination and memory.

OTHER SURVEYS of the temple, like a 1957 book by André Parrot that bears the same title as Goldhill's, have covered the historical ground. But if the first half of Goldhill's study is a biography of a building, its second half offers a consideration of the temple as a powerful symbol with a long influence on the Jewish and the Western mind.

In recounting the history of this influence, Goldhill practices what he calls "an archaeology that uncovers not so much rock and dust as the sedimented layers of human fantasy, politics, and longing." The first of these, fantasy, he unearths by portraying the ways in which the temple has entered the popular imagination, tracing, for example, how it has been represented in European art from the Renaissance onward.

To illustrate the quality of longing, Goldhill includes a chapter called "The Temple of the Scholars: A Building of Words." Here he charts the rabbis' efforts, after the crushing loss of the locus of religious and national life, to redefine Judaism itself while straining to preserve as much continuity as possible with the past. In their reconstituted Judaism, prayer would replace sacrifice and the study-hall the temple, while learning about a lost and longed-for past would become, in itself, almost a new ritual.

Turning to politics—inevitably,

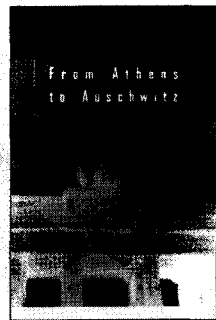


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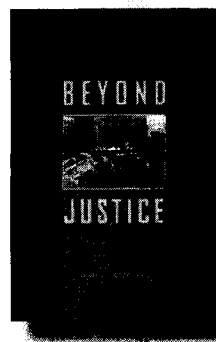


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religious politics—Goldhill shows how Christians tended simultaneously to construe the temple's destruction as proof of Jewish error and to submit the idea of the temple to theological reinterpretation. Thus, the Christian emperors left the Temple Mount barren so as to recall the Jews' rejection of Jesus, while early Christian thinkers drew from the superseded temple sacrifices a central metaphor for Jesus' offering of himself, or, with Paul, identified the temple with the body of the church ("For we are the temple of the living God").

Muslims, by contrast, wished to replace and finally to erase the Jews' temple. In 691, shortly after they gained control of Jerusalem, they renamed the plaza al-Haram ash-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) and on it erected the Dome of the Rock to commemorate Muhammad's miraculous "night journey" from Mecca to Jerusalem and thence to heaven. The beautiful octagonal shrine, built by Caliph Abd al-Malik, was restored many times, most impressively by Suleiman the Magnificent in the 16th century.

GOLDHILL'S TREATMENT of politics is skillful but thin. This is especially the case in his discussion of the Christian and Islamic uses of the Temple Mount, where he misses the chance to say something larger concerning what they reveal about the relation between Judaism and its daughter faiths. Had he done so, his book would have been close to an indispensable guide.

The problem is not that Goldhill is less than insightful. But at the very moment we want him to examine Christian and Islamic approaches to the temple as symptoms of attitudes toward Judaism generally, and to think through their significance for today, he pulls back. The book's final paragraph makes a bland allusion to the temple as "a symbol that goes to the heart of current Middle Eastern politics and is as bitterly contested now in the 21st

century as at any point in its long history."

True as far as it goes, but there is much more to be said. The biblical temple of Jerusalem, the most spectacular and arguably the most famous sacred building in antiquity, is almost entirely absent from the archaeological record. Astonishingly, there has never been an excavation on the Temple Mount, for the simple reason that the Waqf has refused it.

This is not because its Muslim patrollers are loathe to disturb the priceless site. Though Goldhill fails to mention it, beginning in 1996, in order to complete an enormous new underground mosque at the plaza's southeast corner, the Waqf removed some 13,000 tons of rubble from the Mount, including valuable ancient remnants now being sifted by Israeli archaeologists at a Jerusalem garbage dump.

The new mosque, occupying an area of 1.5 acres, has become the largest in Israel. Yet during its construction, over vociferous but vain Israeli objections, Waqf officials disallowed any archaeological supervision, even after alarming bulges appeared in the southern and eastern walls adjacent to the construction site. Muslim clerics, meanwhile, regularly deny that a Jewish temple ever existed, and almost as regularly seize upon perceived Israeli violations of the site as pretexts to incite deadly riots—as they did most recently in 1990, 1996, and late September 2000 (the start of the so-called al-Aqsá *intifada*).

For religious Jews, it must finally be said, none of this matters. Neither Christian supersessionism nor Muslim erasure has much affected their attachment to a building that stimulates their memory and imagination, informs their sacred literature, and sustains their messianic longings, however figuratively these may be understood. The house of an incorporeal and unseen God, which has itself gone unseen for millennia, thus continues to retain an extraordinary potency, whose full dimensions await

another chronicler. In the meantime, Simon Goldhill's introduction is highly recommended.

Originalist Sin

America's Constitution: A Biography

by Akhil Reed Amar

Random House. 672 pp. \$29.95

Reviewed by
Ken I. Kersch

DURING THE Reagan years, many of the most prominent theorists at our law schools boldly argued either that the meaning of the Constitution was radically indeterminate or that, because the Constitution was a "living" document, judges should interpret it in light of contemporary values. It was folly, they insisted, to try to read our fundamental law according to some notion of "original understanding." This politically precarious stance did not go unanswered, of course. Conservatives like Robert Bork and Edwin Meese led an aggressive defense of the "originalist" approach, arguing that it was the only alternative to rulings based on the idiosyncratic (and often highly political) views of judges.

In the decades since those heated disputes, Akhil Reed Amar of Yale law school has risen to prominence as a self-styled *liberal* originalist. Though a skilled practitioner of the historical methods often associated with conservative legal scholarship, Amar has found very different meanings in the wisdom of the founders and their successors in shaping the constitutional text. The

KEN I. KERSCH teaches politics and constitutional law at Princeton. He is the author of *Constructing Civil Liberties: Discontinuities in the Development of American Constitutional Law* (Cambridge, 2004).

latest installment in his ongoing project is *America's Constitution: A Biography*, a book as informative and insightful as his previous ones—but ultimately, in its broadest conclusions, no more persuasive.

AMERICA'S CONSTITUTION is a lovingly detailed, clause-by-clause exegesis of each of the Constitution's provisions. Amar marries an at times densely legalistic analysis of these provisions to an overarching theoretical argument. As he sees it, the document's diverse clauses are tied together by certain key themes, which he regards as the animating commitments of the founders.

Thus, against those who claim that the Constitution was written by and for propertied elites, Amar shows just how "populist" and "republican" it was for its day, comparing it with contemporary practice in England and in the colonies

themselves before independence. At the same time, he contends that the original text was not only complicit with slavery but was suffused by it, especially through the insidious action of the "three-fifths" clause, which systematically over-represented the South throughout the federal government. What ultimately rescued the Constitution from this damning entanglement, Amar argues, was the founders' faith in popular sovereignty. Through the amendment process, "We the People" would be perpetually able to strive for and achieve the Constitution's "progressive alteration."

Amar also stresses the founders' "geostrategic vision"—their animating concern, that is, that the fledgling nation be strong enough to stand on the world stage—and sees this as the key to understanding their view of federal authority. Thus, in stark contrast to the earlier Articles of Con-

federation, the Constitution gave Congress broad authority not only to tax but to regulate commerce among the states. As for the Presidency, the founders intended to create a strong, energetic executive, one with especially wide prerogatives in our dealings with other nations.

Amar's take on the role of the judiciary will be surprising to many. Echoing the view of a number of conservative scholars, he argues that, in their devotion to republicanism, the founders never meant constitutional review to be the special province of judges. George Washington's first presidential veto was on constitutional grounds, as were many vetos by his successors, including Andrew Jackson's rejection of the Bank of the United States. It was once common, too, for Congress to weigh in on these matters, debating the constitutionality of proposed legislation.

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What the founders rejected, according to Amar, was not judicial review but judicial supremacy. The high court they envisaged would have a rather modest profile, reigning “supreme” chiefly within the sphere of the judicial hierarchy itself, not as the arbiter of all constitutional meaning. As originally intended, constitutional review encompassed the ordinary activity of all three branches, as well as of juries, with the people themselves retaining an important voice.

As FOR the Bill of Rights and the other amendments, Amar reprises and refines arguments from his previous books. Here his innovation is to focus on the transformation wrought by the Civil War amendments, which tore up by its roots the original Constitution’s complicity with chattel slavery. Ratified during Reconstruction, these amendments, Amar writes, inaugurated “a constitutional revolution,” marking “a radical break” with the old order.

Here Amar’s interpretations become especially sweeping. In banning slavery and involuntary servitude, the Thirteenth Amendment (1865) “cast a wide net not merely over the nation’s economy but also over its social structure and its domestic institutions.” The Fourteenth Amendment (1868), which holds that “no state shall . . . deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws,” was intended not just to protect newly freed blacks but, Amar writes, to repudiate “a multitude of inequalities.” No less important to him is the amendment’s “privileges and immunities” clause, which “codified a profound nationalization of American identity.”

Later alterations of the Constitution continued in this vein. “Much as zealous reformers in the mid-1860’s had enacted large wealth transfers from slavocrats to freedmen,” Amar asserts, “so a new generation of idealists in the mid-1910’s aimed to reduce anti-republican ex-

tremes of wealth and want,” giving us both a national income tax and the direct election of Senators (then still being picked by increasingly corrupt state legislatures). Subsequent amendments brought still more social change—the franchise for women and young people, the elimination of poll taxes, representation in the electoral college for the District of Columbia—in what Amar sees as an ongoing process of constitutional “democratization.”

AMAR’S EXHAUSTIVE and meticulous analysis of the Constitution is refreshing in many ways. Done in an obvious spirit of veneration (the book’s opening chapter is titled “In the Beginning”), it departs from most other accounts in its sustained attention to the structure and institutional logic of the Constitution—as opposed to the glosses on it added by the Supreme Court. Amar provides insightful readings of many of the text’s least discussed but most significant provisions, and his interpretive themes breathe political and historical life into a document too often treated mechanically.

And yet, for all of Amar’s professions of fidelity to “original” meaning, this book has been transparently written to serve (depressingly familiar) contemporary political objectives. He selects the threads in his account with great care, weaving a tapestry that comes to bear a striking and unmistakable resemblance to modern liberalism. Amar devotes considerable space, for instance, to downplaying the founders’ commitment to property rights, evincing little understanding of property’s place in 18th-century political thought. When it comes to the Reconstruction amendments, he insists that they were a precedent for later federal measures aimed at seizing and redistributing wealth, even though the “property in question was the slaves whose human equality was, at the same time, receiving a profound if belated recognition.

More broadly, Amar attributes to the founders a view of the federal government’s reach that would have been profoundly alien to them. Congress’s power to regulate interstate commerce, he argues, was originally intended to apply to “all forms of intercourse in the affairs of life”—a position well beyond even the wildest flights of the New-Deal or Warren Court. As he surely knows, for most of American history (and certainly for the founding era) the powers of the national government were regarded as quite limited, leaving a deep residuum of “police” powers—over health, safety, and morals—to the states.

Most disappointing of all, perhaps, in light of his supposed rejection of judicial supremacy in favor of a more popular constitutionalism, is Amar’s obvious eagerness to pitch his arguments to the modern Supreme Court. In one footnote, he suggests that the Justices could have availed themselves of the Thirteenth Amendment’s prohibition against slavery in order to hold a state liable for failing to protect a child under the supervision of its social-welfare system. In another, he points to the Fourteenth Amendment’s “equal-birth principle” (that is, the equality before the law of “all persons born or naturalized” in the U.S.) as the best text for the Justices to have invoked when they struck down (on different grounds) an amendment to the Colorado state constitution that prohibited municipalities from enacting gay-rights ordinances.

As a touchstone for constitutional interpretation, originalism serves its purpose only when practiced in the proper spirit, a spirit that tries to insulate the interpreter from the whims and prejudices of his day. In the wrong hands, it can be all sail and no anchor, a tool for both judicial activism and government beyond law. The Constitution’s “real end,” Amar ventures at one point, “is the vast creative white space looming just beyond the latest amendment.” It is a space, alas, he knows too well.

Why Has Latin America Turned Left?

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In the past five years, Latin American governments that came to power in the 1990s and favored privatization, deregulation, and the opening of their borders to foreign trade and investment have been swept aside and replaced by presidents who lean to the left.

In Brazil, the Workers' Party candidate, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, was elected to the presidency in 2002. The following year, Argentina elected a left-leaning Peronist, Nestor Kirchner; earlier this year in Uruguay, Tabaré Vázquez's election ended 150 years of electoral dominance by the country's two established political parties. Venezuela retained Hugo Chavez and his "Bolivarian revolution" in a national referendum in August 2004. Bolivia has yet to elect a leftist president but is likely to do so. That country's "Movement toward Socialism" has forced President Carlos Mesa to resign and has signaled that potential successors will be met with similar resistance. Mexico also appears poised to follow in the footsteps of its southern neighbors; the leading contender in the 2006 presidential elections is Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, the populist mayor of Mexico City.

What accounts for this sea of change in Latin American politics? Have Latin American voters undergone a profound ideological transformation in half a decade? Or do other factors explain the defeat of politicians who espoused free markets by those whose rhetoric echoes a more populist past?

Latin America's anemic economic performance explains the leftward shift in its politics. With the exceptions of Chile and Costa Rica, the economies of Latin America have limped along

for the past two decades. In the 1980s, Latin America's economies nose-dived as a result of decades of protectionism, government intervention in markets, and deficit spending. In the 1990s, in an effort to turn things around, Latin American governments opened up their economies to foreign trade and investment, cut spending, and sold off state-owned enterprises, with promises of rapid economic growth. Those reforms did produce positive impacts but not of the magnitude that populations expected. Indeed, most countries grew just enough to make up for their contraction in the 1980s; Mexico's per capita GDP in 2004, for example, was only 15 percent greater than it had been in 1982.

Meanwhile, Latin America's labor force proliferated. Most of the Latin American population is young—recently entering, or about to enter, the workforce. Given that a majority of voters have entered the labor force since the early 1980s and encountered a dearth of opportunities, it is not surprising that they have been receptive to more heterodox approaches to economic policymaking. Equally unsurprising is the new Latin American governments' lack of enthusiasm for U.S. proposals for a hemisphere-wide free trade area.

The implication for U.S. policy is clear: if policymakers are concerned about the leftward shift in Latin America, they should concentrate on helping the region grow. This help will need to go well beyond free trade. Indeed, they might take a page out of the experience of the EU, whose wealthier nations have helped subsidize public investment in its poorer partners.

—Stephen Haber

Stephen Haber is the Peter and Helen Bing Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution. He is also the A. A. and Jeanne Welch Milligan Professor in the School of Humanities and Sciences.

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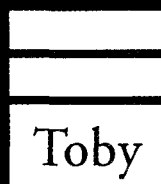
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